The Science of Religions.

BURNOUF.

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BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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London:

SWAN SONNENSCHEIN, LOWREY & CO.,

PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1888.

Butler & Tanner,
The Selwood Printing Works,
Frome, and London.

PREFACE.

It is not surprising that, of all the questions which the scientific study of religions has sought to solve, the greatest interest should attach to those which relate to the origin and development of our own faith, and its connexion with other systems. It was formerly held as a point beyond all dispute that Christianity was, in its origin, a purely Semitic religion—the legitimate offspring and successor of Judaism. Certainly it was also, at the same time, admitted that its growth had been influenced by various causes—in particular by the philosophy of Plato and his successors; but it can scarcely be said that its Semitic nature was ever seriously doubted. The present work of Burnouf, on the contrary, was written with the object of proving that Christianity is essentially an Âryan religion. Such an attitude would formerly have been scarcely possible; and that it is possible at the present day is due almost entirely to the revelations of comparative philology; and both the present work and the *Essai sur le Vêda* show that Burnouf is deeply impressed with the supreme importance of these discoveries.

One of the first and greatest triumphs of this science was to unseal the ancient sacred books of the East, which had in the course of ages become unintelligible even to the priests themselves, and to reveal to us many truths of which no idea had previously been entertained. It was proved

beyond the possibility of dispute that the great Âryan race sprang from one centre, and that, previous to the separation of the different branches, there was a period during which the whole race lived united, speaking the same language and possessing the same religious ideas. Nay, further, the data which the new science afforded were sufficient to justify the attempt to reconstruct both the primitive Âryan language and the primitive Âryan religion. Both of these tasks have been attempted; and although there will no doubt always exist a variety of opinion as to how far such reconstruction can be safely carried out, yet there is an almost absolute certainty with respect to the main points. Comparative philology may be said to have supplied the missing link which made it possible to gather together in one centre a number of chains, whose connexion with one another was previously unsuspected.

The study of the sacred books enabled us to appreciate for the first time the real character of the ancient faiths of the East. Before this, our ideas concerning the religions of the *Vêda* and *Zend-Avesta* were derived partly from an imperfect acquaintance with the modern religions of India, partly from analogies drawn from the mythologies of Greece and Rome; and it is needless to add that the ideas thus derived were hopelessly wrong. It was at length seen that the foundation of these ancient faiths lay in an intelligent conception of nature and the operation of her laws. The gods and goddesses of the *Vêda* are nothing more than impersonations of natural forces and phenomena; and the acts of worship which it prescribes are nothing but the symbols of nature's acts. To take as an example the best known and most frequently quoted instance of this: the sacred fire of the altar is over and over again made to represent the spirit of life which distinguishes the animate

from the inanimate; and the Vêdic bards never tire of drawing a parallel, complete in every detail, between the two, starting from the generation of fire by means of the two sticks, and tracing the course of its existence until the time when the last spark has died out and the dead ash only remains.

So far, the fact that the religion of the *Vêda* is a system of nature-worship, and its ceremonial a system of conscious symbolism, is acknowledged on all hands. It is from this point that the school of thought of which Emile Burnouf is undoubtedly the champion diverges.

Burnouf contends, that if we trace the religious systems of ancient India and Persia to their source, we come to a primitive Âryan religion, which sprang from a deep insight into the principles of nature, and which was, in fact, a refined system of metaphysics founded on a thorough grasp of physical facts. According to Burnouf—and this is the great distinctive feature of his teaching — this primitive Âryan religion was not only the fountain-head of the religions of the *Vêda* and *Avesta*, but also of Christianity itself. With the object of proving this proposition, he proceeds to show how it is possible to refer all the principal Christian doctrines, rites, and symbols—as, for example, the doctrine of the Trinity, the eucharist, the sign of the cross—to this source; and he holds that these only attain their complete significance when so referred. Such, according to Burnouf, was the "secret doctrine" of the early Christians, which had been handed down traditionally until the time when it formed the real teaching of Christ and His disciples. This was the esoteric religion, the possession only of the enlightened, and remaining from age to age ever the same. There was, on the other hand, an exoteric religion, in which this pure truth was adapted to the popular

comprehension by means of parables and symbols, which varied in accordance with times and circumstances. The distinction between the esoteric and exoteric faith was rigidly observed until the time of Constantine, who, by publicly authorizing Christianity, did away with the necessity for secrecy. There were times however, before this period, when the exoteric religion threatened to become paramount, and, through the influence of changes and accretions, to cease to perform its original function as the interpreter of abstruse truth to the popular mind. It was, according to Burnouf, with the object of checking this tendency that works like the Gospel according to St. John, in which a certain portion of this abstruse truth was revealed, were written.

The main questions on the solution of which Burnouf's teaching must stand or fall are: whether the existence of a primitive Âryan religion such as he supposes can be satisfactorily proved; whether a natural account can be given of the means by which it was transmitted through many centuries and into a different race; and whether the development of Christianity can or cannot be more satisfactorily explained in this way than in any other.

There is without doubt very much in Christianity that presents a striking similarity to what we find in the religions of India and Persia; and the question, which we have no right to shirk, is, How can this similarity be explained? Burnouf has offered one solution, and a solution which, whether accepted or not, is, at least, worthy of serious consideration. His theory is expounded and his arguments are worked out as no one but the possessor of such varied learning and so complete an acquaintance with oriental literature and the history of oriental religions could have done. Burnouf's argument could scarcely be adequately

represented by an analysis, however careful, still less by a mere sketch such as alone has been the object of this preface. To properly appreciate his attitude on the vexed question of the Science of Religions, the book itself must be read; and it may be confidently affirmed that every reader, whether able or not to accept Burnouf's conclusions, will find therein much that is instructive and suggestive of thought.

E. J. Rapson.

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THE SCIENCE OF RELIGIONS.

CHAPTER I.

METHOD—PRINCIPLES.

The present century will not expire without having witnessed the entire and comprehensive establishment of a science whose elements are at this moment still widely scattered, a science unknown to preceding centuries and undefined, and which we for the first time now call the *Science of Religions*. For a quarter of a century have its channels been deepening and multiplying with accelerating speed; and though their current has been principally swelled by contributions from Germany,—England, France, and Italy may also be said to have helped in partly forcing the floodgates of truth. Certainly the scholars of these three countries have furnished fewer volumes bearing on the question than Germany; but they have over the latter, as a rule, the advantage of prudence in their interpretations, judgment in their methods, and clearness in their deductions. As the science of religions, without being part of history, often leans on historical facts, one of the first conditions will have to be the admission of facts only after their having been discussed and submitted to all the demands of criticism. This science, on the other hand, considerably oversteps the boundaries of history, and comes into contact with other new sciences still in their cradle, and whose theories it cannot adopt without a certain restraint and the concurrence of learned scholars.

Among these, comparative philology occupies the first place. It leads us into the remote past, far beyond the

most ancient written documents, and confronts us with religious notions which in those remote times were shared and acknowledged by an entire race and added to by their successors. Still comparative philology scarcely exists as a science; its method and essential development are nowhere expounded and explained. When brought into the field with religious subjects, such as mythology, for instance, there is the danger of setting to work false principles or of applying them wrongly. Philosophy, which is not a special science, but presides over all theoretic researches, also holds a share in the science of religions. Certainly metaphysical operations in no way alter facts, and but slightly modify what they infer; but the science of religions is not merely a gathering of facts: like the philosophy of history it is a theory, and according to the adopted system of philosophy the interpretative parts of the science will be construed in various manners. To a man belonging to a sensual school, the God of the moderns is an illusion, the gods of olden days mere fancy and a pastime, poetic figures, personified names. A spiritual philosopher will detect very different matter, indeed no trivial inclinations will invade this study when undertaken by a man wholly desirous of bringing to light nothing but the truth, or by one who hopes, by the help of science, to raise bulwarks around the faith dear to him. A fervent Christian will be horrified when told, in the name of science, that the pagan gods were no false conceptions, after having called them false gods all his life. Equally difficult would it be to persuade some philosophers of Christ's divinity. Yet certain it is that those very gods were worshipped by races who, in many respects, came up to our civilization; on the other hand, there are infallible means of convincing the most incredulous philosopher of Christ's divinity.[1]

Every science, above all, that of religions, requires a

[1] We can indeed, as will be shown presently, prove that the notion of Christ is far anterior to the Christian era, and that its fibres mingled in the soil with other great religions. Traced back to its origin, it is found amalgamated with the worship of fire, of life and thought collected into an eternal principle called God.

liberal mind, free from all prejudice. From the fact of its presenting itself alike to the Brahmin of India, to the Buddhist of Siam or China, and to the Christian in Europe, it is of great consequence that every one regard his heart as the safe shrine of his faith, but his mind as the brave and impartial guide in the ways of reason and truth. The science of religions has nothing in common with polemics. Men who have over half a century been giving shape to its elements are the enemies of no religion in particular, the foes of no worship; in return, they merit a like forbearance. Moreover our century is too deeply indebted to all sciences to allow anathemas like those that were hurled on geology some years ago to rest on one of them. The science of geology is, as all others, taught in our ecclesiastical schools, as well as in the Brahmin schools of India. A day will come when the science of religions will also find a place there, and when it will prove no less useful nor less beautiful than the science of terrestrial revolutions. Barren wars are no longer practicable: an attack directed against the irresistible powers of truth always defeats the aggressor. I would fain determine the nature and general conditions of the science of religions, mark its limits, trace a plan of it, and exhibit the principal results obtained so far. Let our attention first dwell upon the methods and the principles of this science.

The elements of every religion can be defined *à priori;* this method is followed almost solely by modern eclecticism, borne up by the bold vigour and proud self-assertion of a new school. It led to a doctrine called *natural religion*,—a doctrine that was accepted by nearly all the disciples of the school, and taken into the arena with its opponents the *positive religions*. We will not now test the value of this theory; but facts have proved that it never became a practice nor a reality. Natural religion did not emanate either from books or teachings, and since its principle admits that it is essentially individual and pliable to the bent of every one's own philosophy, we cannot possibly say whether it ever exercised any sort of influence on the con-

duct of men. The European clergy, who combated this doctrine as insufficient and incapable of taking the place of the sacred institution, were essentially philosophers of life's reality. We see to-day, by the results obtained, that natural religion has scarcely one champion left. The time in which we live enjoys a freedom of action and a widely extended scientific independence warped by far less anxiety than formerly. The time has passed when provocation drew down insults upon religion and worship; our pastors and priests live in concord with one another and with the consciences and conduct of each other's flocks. This general goodwill extends to philosophers, who are now no longer goaded to raise the phantom of natural religion within sight of the altar. A great calm has followed upon the former contentions between philosophy and religion; by its clear light we realize that though an overbearing clergy must be suppressed in justice to the community's welfare, their dogma and worship are not to blame. We know of countries where religion prospers, and the clergy count for nothing; of others, again, where the priests tyrannise both over community and sovereign, and the soul sits in darkness. Once the distinction was established between priesthood and religion, science was not far off; as for the interest and independence of a State, none could from that hour watch better over them than the State itself. Thus philosophers and historians, left without opponents, wended their way back to theory.

The scientific spirit is the great power that now sways all communities; its first disciples were mathematicians, then the students of the physical world's phenomena, and, last of all, the investigators of the moral world's science. A mere glimpse of the bond which unites all these studies carries with it the conviction that philosophy can no longer claim isolation; that metaphysics, the science of God, and psychology, into which eclecticism has but lately crept as into a fortress, are no longer sufficing to themselves; that in these days there are no separate sciences—they are the several component parts of a thing called science.

By the foregoing I have endeavoured to show briefly the drift of the mind's impulse during the last few years, in order to make clear what place the science of religions occupies among other sciences, and by what method it has attained unto its position. Among the factors that constitute the moral world we cannot regard those proceeding from the domain of religion as the least considerable either in number or effect. There are peoples whose religion stands at zero: they are not, it is true, highly intelligent; then there are others whose religious institution ranks in importance with the civil and political; others, again, whose philosophy and religion go hand in hand, and that too without any obscuring influence on the former; with certain races religious deeds predominate over and seem to absorb all others. Indian literature and history on the propagation of Indian ideas having so greatly manifested themselves of late, convince us that the true understanding of ancient and modern faiths, ancient philosophy and Greek writings, can come to us alone from the East. Now India is the country of religions *par excellence*, its literature and sacred rites, its philosophy and religious dogmas, travel in one direction. This being so, we must perforce turn to the study of Indian worships and dogmas; and having discovered their origins, we feel convinced that this is the fountain-head to which the whole western world must look for true and profound information on matters of religion. Indeed, the science of religions never could have begun or continued its existence but for this information.

This new science with which we are occupied has nothing in common with the eclectic doctrine of natural religion; it is, in fact, not a doctrine, but the mainspring of all doctrines.

À priori conjectures do not enter into its method, for it is a science of facts. Its code of laws is based upon observation and analysis, upon interpretation of facts, sometimes bold, but never rash. These facts are of divers natures. Taking modern religions, for instance, which often spring from very lofty metaphysical conceptions, we find that the

facts were and are being brought to light by the noblest of human intellects. None but a metaphysician could enter into the science of religions. Do we ever meet in the ordinary walks of life any one prepared to express distinct and rational ideas on the meaning of the Trinity, incarnation, grace, eucharist, transubstantiation, or possessing an historical knowledge of one of these dogmas? These belong exclusively to the domain of metaphysics. But in the case of ancient religions, whose *naturalistic* character has long been recognised, the functions of the science will be exclusively performed by its physical instrumentality. Thus for a right conception of Neptune and Apollo, we should merely watch the phenomenal effects of water and light.

Again, when facts are part of the religious history, they are mutable, they vary with each belief, like human discernment and institutions, and in respective proportions. Certain fundamental rites, such as prayer, for instance, remain unchanged for centuries. Others, again, springing from a local and temporal need or inclination, vanish from the page of history, and reappear at a given moment, changed and transformed. Other rites have drifted away altogether out of the circle, and into the misty region of tradition and superstition; of this an excellent illustration is the manner in which traditions travelled from their Indian home, settled down into semi-obscurity, and once more came to the surface as Grimm's fairy tales. Facts like these are numerous enough in every corner of the earth; they are, with regard to the science of religions, the same as those blocks of stone which in geology are called *erratics*, and which seem to have leaped on to foreign soil with the sole apparent object of attesting to an anterior state of things. Science never rejects any facts, but rather verifies and records them, and always welcomes them; the more so as the vulgar are ever ready to reject facts on the ground of their antiquity and obscurity, in preference to glaring but postulate contemporary propositions. I agree with Max Müller, who says that "the most ancient and shattered pages of traditions are dear to us, nay, dearer perhaps than the

more copious chapters of modern times." Original facts are therefore the solid base and foundation of the science of religions; it ranks on a par with the other sciences of observation; its method places it on a line with history and comparative philology, and the rest of its elements have all the attributes of philosophy.

An argument which has often been raised I would now like to sift. It has been said that the limitless number of religious facts precludes the possibility of collection and scientific analysis. It is true that the number of past and present religions is greater than generally supposed. From a habit of association with only two or three, we are apt to forget the existence of others. Yet we cannot leave out of our general computation and scientific comparison the religions of Africa, America, and Oceania, however worthless they be. Such local religions are innumerable. We should lengthen the list considerably by adding all the heresies, schisms, and sects into which the great religious systems of civilized countries are divided; again, by adding the various forms under which dogmas and worships have appeared since the earliest days of history: and how about prehistoric ramifications?

Though science may fail in ever bringing to light the sum total of facts, it will only share the lot of all sciences of observation. Physics, chemistry, natural history, and the almost mathematically accurate science of astronomy, are they worthless because some of their elements have yet to be discovered? Nay, on the contrary.

There are bodies in nature whose proportions and functions are on a limited scale: thus in humanity there are religions whose influence is limited. But equally as these insignificant bodies obey the laws dictated by physics and chemistry, those obscure religions participate in the general definitions and formulas of the science. In short, the classifications of phenomena, their grouping, are simply the logical pigeon-holes for any freshly discovered facts. Now nature does not proceed at random, and knows no law of exceptions; therefore to increase the number of those pigeon-

holes by one single unit it would require the discovery of an entirely new order of facts. For this reason, the vegetation of Australia, notwithstanding its wide scope, has contributed but a very small addition to the catalogue of botanical species, and altered neither the classifications of the first magnitude nor the established laws.

We may therefore safely undertake to divide into groups both the ancient and modern religions without fear of a complication of such groups. Of course these again may be reduced to categories by applying the ordinary methods of natural history and other sciences of observation. When these preliminaries are got over, we may proceed to the physiological study, as it were, of religions; and then we shall see, as in botany, that the collected religions of one group are alike in organization, constituent principles, general effects, and, as a rule, alike in their germs. Simple observations like these even have the power of historical elucidation. Finally, after an extensive comparison, all known religions are included; their essential elements are soon discovered, their career of development traced back, their ancient forms recognised, and gradually their origin is revealed.

We know now how far removed we are from the *à priori* religious theories of our former schools of philosophy. How tottering their systems appear in comparison with the immense basis of our present science of religions. Indeed, the first general law recognised by this science overthrows at one move the doctrine of natural religion, as well as modern attempts and those of antiquity to create a philosophic religion.

This law, which is ratified by the sum total of observations, and which acts as their exponent, makes the following declarations: Every religion consists of two elements, the *god* and the *rite:* therefore any school that does not formally recognise the reality of a god is unable to found a religion; and any attempt to found a religion without a rite, that is, without worship, is vain and impossible.

There is a great religion, at present numbering as many adherents as Christianity, yet seemingly without a god: it

is Buddhism; but whoever regards Buddhism as an atheistic school or a material philosophy surely forgets that pantheism is the foundation of that religion as it is of Brahminism. Neither of these religions has the power of representing God by a formula, nor of worshipping Him as an absolute unity; only in His secondary forms and through their medium is He accessible to men. In Buddhism the same supreme attributes of divinity are recognised as in Brahminism, and its founder, Çâkyamuni, worshipped as the nearest human approach to the Divinity by his wisdom and goodness.

A noticeable fact is, that the baser the religion the plainer is its god; the more lofty and ideal, the more distant he seems. Buddhism is as supreme among oriental religions as Christianity is among the western; as to our mind the Buddhist divinity is vague, so is the Christian God indefinable when His nature is analysed. The Christian divines are unanimously agreed that their God is hidden and incomprehensible, full of mystery, appealing to our faith and not to our reason. The Greek and Latin gods appealed to the imagination. They had a body like ours, though more noble and beautiful; they had our passions; they reasoned like ourselves, and erred as we do in our reasonings; finally, they were the creatures of birth, and sometimes even the victims of death. To be an artist and an observer of men gave a sufficient comprehension of their attributes. In some cases a doll, a stone, a log of wood was a god, and is so to this day, in barbarous communities. They are mere lifeless matter, but none the less gods—gods which with their corresponding rites constitute the gross attributes of the comprehensive term religion.

Science proves therefore that if the faith in a god is the inherent element of every religion, its durability is not dependent upon the conceived standard of its god. We even find in the noblest of religions, among Brahmins, Buddhists, and Christians, many men whose personal conception of God is of a low order; yet they would not be called unbelievers. In fact, a higher idea of God than the generally accepted one is sure of being censured and called

a heresy. How can we doubt then that the conception of God is essentially, primitively individual, and in keeping with the general capabilities and tenour of the mind. There can be no uniform standard; and yet psychology insists that reason, that is to say, the conception of God, constitutes the distinguishing character of men, identical with all. On the other hand, the science of religions brings to light the varied arguments of men, and the different degrees of lucidity in the conception of God. One conception sees an absolute and metaphysical being, with colourless, shapeless, undefined attributes; another makes God a visible shape; and yet another believes in, worships, and requires nothing loftier than the real and tangible presence.

The individual notion of God would be the principle of the natural religion, were such a one possible; but since men never live a life of isolation but in community with other men, their collective conceptions of God are soon shaped and framed in a manner best suited to each community. We can find no records either of history or observation to contradict this statement. Comparative philology, which dives into far remoter antiquity than history, proves that the conception of God is expressed in the earliest language in terms which were intelligible to all conditions of men, and by common nouns (as they are called in grammar), long before the application of proper nouns. The names Neptune, Jupiter, Juno would simply be meaningless words to persons ignorant of classics. The ancient Romans were no doubt quite as ignorant as to the sense implied by those words; but still they associated them with certain statues and figures in their temples and with their respective religious attributes: they were, in short, the embodiment of those proper nouns. Still further examples we find in the Vêdic hymns, where the names of the gods are common terms, sometimes even adjectives, and always with an every-day meaning. We may be certain therefore that at this early period, or even before, the individual conceptions of God had been collected together, framed, and vulgarized. Since then and up to our days, as a con-

sequence of the transmission, discussion, and elucidation of the conception, it has become more spiritual and rarefied. I maintain that those are also the processes by which a conception first manifests and establishes itself in any community; my argument is borne out by the first question and final answer in the Catholic catechism, whose formula distinctly conveys to all believers a common and immutable notion of God.

The adoption of a common notion of God means laying the first course of a religious edifice; but from this time forth the notion ceases to be individual, its formula becomes part of the language; notion and formula are now a common property. According to Max Müller, religions originally belonged to families and to extremely restricted communities. Still we must remember that a new or improved notion of God cannot fail to spread rapidly over such a community and stir its members to a common train of thoughts and reflections. There is no doubt that the Vêdic hymns must be attributed to families in which the transmission of the sacred doctrine was carried from father to son, before the advent of the sacerdotal element; nevertheless in many of the hymns are to be met identical formulas, though they be attributed to contemporary families dwelling in the most opposite points of the Indian Heptapotamy. No doubt these formulas, which invariably suggest a Divine power, were already with that god part of the common religion; there must therefore have existed a formal and tacit understanding between the priest-authors of those hymns, or between their ancestors,—an understanding which ended in the general adoption of certain formulas. However that may have been, it is clear that the first unanimous expression is the origin of dogma, which took a firm shape as soon as its votaries acknowledged it to be the true conception of their divinity. In the gospels and in other canonical books there is only a very small number of metaphysical expressions relative to the Divine nature (the fourth gospel making a slight exception); whilst a great number of them are contained in the books

of the Fathers, whereof many have simply survived as the black on white exponents of individual opinions, others have been received into the acknowledged domain and into the body, as it were, of Christian metaphysics. If we compare the two extreme epochs of Christianity, the gospels with the present, the simplicity of the dogma in the first case and its vast development in the second cannot but strike the most unprejudiced mind. What more natural than the desire to gain an historical insight into those eighteen hundred intermediary years, those epochs of enlightenment and Christian evolution, now that insight reveals to us the successive processes and actions of preaching, books, private correspondences, and councils? In the first two processes the orator or author has either inoculated the dogma with his own personal ideas and inflexions, or when his conception differed, let loose the floodgates of heresy. Dissensions raised in the council chamber in defence or in the arraignment of individual opinions created formulas which, if they were not the fruits of one member, sprang from the combined efforts of the council.

Since by means of a continuous series of authentic documents we are able to trace, step by step, the development of Christian metaphysics, I have chosen this example, in order to show what elements enter into the formation of a dogma. It is not for me to examine which religion, in exclusion of all others, was a special inspiration of its doctors. Science cannot handle such questions, which pertain solely to theology, and which may best be solved by each religion concerned in its own manner and measure. Several religions trace their origin to a founder; as, for instance, Islamism to Mohammed, Christianity to Jesus, and Buddhism to Çâkyamuni. There is no reason for disputing that their first impulse was given by their founders: such facts are freely admitted and taken into consideration by science; but the pure and simple humanity of Buddha, the inspired qualities of Mohammed, the divinity of Jesus as understood by the Church, are positively foreign to science, and beyond its powers of solution.

To accuse science of hostility towards the divinity of Christ is a grave error; science is possessed of no means of either attacking or defending this doctrine, which is an article of faith, and not a subject for scientific discussion. I, for my part, do not approve of preachers and authors who make it their business to prove Christ's divinity by human arguments. If their arguments are right, then faith loses its merit, for no praise is due to the belief in a proved theorem; if their arguments are wrong, they jeopardise religion by shaking believers in their faith. Remember also that all these seeming testifications of Christ's divinity might as fitly apply to other personages; as, for instance, to Çâkyamuni, who was however never regarded as a god, nor worshipped by sacrifice (*yajna*), but only with commemorative honour (*pûja*). If science did enter with believers into discussions on the divinity of Jesus, it would also have to include other Divine personages, lest it might be called one-sided theology. It does not examine whether one god be more worthy of its exaltation than another; it tries to prove that each religion has its god, to give a correct idea of each faith, and to trace out the historic track of that idea. The conception of the god does not constitute religion from the mere fact of its being personal and familiar. Thus the conception, from remaining unuttered, becomes absorbed at last by the activity of the mind. If however it is uttered in speech, its sole effect is to produce and engender theodicy, which is in itself a portion of philosophy or science. Indeed, however rough a conception a man may have of his god, it is always accompanied by feelings which he entertains at no other time. This feeling, which Spinoza analysed with such accuracy, is twofold, and perfectly descriptive of the idea one cherishes of a foreign and supernatural power, and of one's own inferiority. According to the predominance of good or evil vested in this power, its influence awakens love or fear; and since men always suppose their gods to have understanding, they confess their love and fear by prayer. Science has not met, so far, with one single religion where its essential act—prayer—is absent. Nevertheless prayer is an inward

activity of the mind, and is able to dispense with the form of speech; for saints and zealots maintain that no human tongue can express their sentiments. If the whole of religion were to confine itself to this secret intellectual ardour, worship would be useless, and never could have established itself; but the same natural and irresistible desire which impels man to communicate his idea of God to others, and to establish with them an exchange of religious notions, also impels him to express his sentiments—to pray aloud, in fact. Then are we to suppose that an isolated man prays alone, and makes for himself a solitary religion in harmony with his surroundings, like, for instance, the natural religion of philosophers? Certainly not; for we know that all the hermits which have abounded at different times were the erst members of a religious congregation, and in their solitude merely carried on its sacred rites and formulas. Here then are two series of natural facts, two laws which science meets again in every religion: on the one hand, the Divine conception is individual at first, then makes itself popular and engenders formulas and dogmas; on the other hand, each individual mind conceives religious sentiments, which evolve into prayer, and prayer engenders rite.

Now if these sentiments were strong enough to impel a man to an outward act of religious signification, it is clear that these acts can be called a worship. We do indeed in history find certain founders of religions who, in a way, create new rites in moments of lofty exaltation and powerful desires of utterance. Thus a saint, whilst in a mystic transport, seeing his God surrounded by His angels and cherubim, and himself mingling in the sacred choir, composed the *Te Deum*. The greater number of those who founded, not religious but holy orders, come under this head; with them the ever-present sentiment of ecstasy shaped itself at last into the desire to subjugate all the acts of daily life to rites. In time a holy order was established for the practice of those new rules and symbols, and there they have been preserved by the disciples of those founders. The same as of monastic rules may be said of the general

rites of a worship. The pressures of daily life, the political and especially the domestic responsibilities of every community, the want of leisure for the observance of sacred rites, will always keep saints and recluses in the minority. Therefore whoever created and established a new and practicable rite was not necessarily an inspired person, but rather the intellectual and active vehicle of hitherto unsatisfied religious desires. Now when disciples take up and work out and multiply certain thoughts and their rites, there comes a time when they grow overwhelming, and a distinction has to be made between obligatory and accessory ceremonies. But in the rush of daily occupations even the obligatory duties are forsaken. Women have more leisure; they also have more devotion, though their conception of God is generally inferior to that formed by men: yet they too sometimes are forced by circumstances to abandon the observance of ceremonies which once seemed to be part of their life, but whose very meaning is gradually fading from their memory. The practice of rites once more returns to its individual and former condition, but this time under new circumstances; when the number of its followers is reduced to none, the religion perishes, by which we see that rite is an essential element in it! The question of the origin and nature of rites is a great source of disagreement among the scholars of to-day, and springs from the diversity of philosophical doctrines. Those who lean towards materialistic systems, renew, under more specious form, the Epicurean doctrines of Lucretius; they attribute the creation of rites and dogmas to illusions of the mind, and to a sort of poetic sentiment.[1]

Comparative philosophy gives fresh support to this interpretation, and seems to invest it again with the authority of which it was robbed by the refutations of Epicurean systems. It is certain that, when any new notion of God gives birth to a worship, it undergoes a poetic transformation, without which there would never be any rites. An absolute Being,

[1] "Nunc quæ causa deum per magnas numina gentes
Pervolgarit et ararum compleverit urbes," etc.

invariable, immutable, without shape, impalpable to the imagination, can scarcely be worshipped or prayed to; it is not easy to see how a rite, after all only a human action, can possibly interest a Being of such a nature. But no sooner is He conceived as a Providence, that is to say, as exercising His own activity in the world, than a junction takes place between Him and man; He is now in a way accessible—prayer and acts of devotion may cease to be indifferent to Him. Let us take a community of men whose metaphysical notion of God is not a very exalted one, with whom the idea of Providence does not represent a power actuated by general and inflexible laws, what else can their prayer be but a rogation? what significance can their rites possess but that of homage, which pays the price of a favour, and paves the way for fresh ones? And of such is the religion of the *Vêda;* its god, his laws and actions, its religious sentiment, prayer, and worship are above all perfectly expressible in human language and imbued with human colouring. The mere philologer does not consult the source of its origin, but from its literal expression takes the god to be a simply poetic term, a realized metaphor. *Vishnu* is a word meaning "penetrating," and can be applied to the sun, whose rays penetrate everything; hence the natural opinion may be entertained that, before being conceived as a god, Vishnu was the sun, and nothing more. Jupiter espoused Leda, and had by her Helen. Jupiter being none other than the luminous heaven (Ζεύς, in Sanscrit *dyaus*), Leda is night, which hides all things; the brilliant daughter of light and night, who can she be but the moon, called in Greek *Selene?* The word Σελήνη is identical with the word Ἑλένη. Helen, the daughter of Jupiter and Leda, was therefore simply the moon, before being transformed into the most beautiful woman of her time, and causing the great war with Troy.

Such is the method of interpretation applied now-a-days to rites and dogmas, anent which I shall make a few remarks. The matter is of a more delicate nature than would at first appear. If the disciples of the philological school wish us to understand that the identity of a proper noun with a com-

mon noun or an adjective sufficiently explains the origin of this god, and his introduction into the dogma, I do not hesitate in saying that their doctrine is false and baneful, since it reduces the science of religions to a new application of material philosophy. If Vishnu is nothing but the radiant sun, if Jupiter is nothing but the heavens, I see in those divine beings nothing but material facts clothed in poetic expressions, and I regard their legends as the natural development of those facts. Once launched in this career of philological interpretations, one necessarily admits that every conception of a Divine personage may be reduced to phraseology; that is, to metaphors. It makes one say, with Max Müller, that "gods are names without beings"—the neatest possible expression of nihilistic doctrines applied to the study of religions.

Let it be remembered however that the veritable problem does not consist in detecting in a more or less ancient language the radical meaning of the name of a god. This by itself would be taking only a superficial view of things, for it remains to be explained how men could effect such a transformation as from a word to a god, and by what mysterious means they bridged over the space between the one and the other. It is said they made a god out of a word: does affirming a fact explain it? Again, I say, what were their mysterious means? what philosopher who, conversant with psychology and having analysed and classified his idea, can solve this second problem? They would all maintain that to change an obvious idea into a god, one must first possess the notion of god; that it is impossible to accept a natural phenomenon, great as it may be, as a power, before the idea of power is realized, and that therefore men must first have conceived their gods before giving them names. But once their gods were conceived, what was more natural than that priests and poets should apply to them ordinary and descriptive terms, which also, quite naturally and by degrees lost their common and general meaning, and formed themselves into special names or proper nouns.

Philologists must be aware that the false principle by which they are guided does not undermine the divinity of ancient religions alone, but also modern ones, as the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost, and such names even as Christ and Jesus, all of which it reduces to metaphors, with the sole distinction in the matter of modern religions that their metamorphoses are of less material objects and frequently pertain to things of the soul. Indeed, the principle of philological interpretations might be applied to a great many categories of terms, to philosophical ones and to others. The name of *God* originated from the Latin *deus*, the Sanscrit *devâ*. This latter comes from the root *div*, which means *to shine*, and refers either to the brightness of illumined objects, to light or to the shining sky, so that men might imagine themselves to be holding the notion of God, whereas it is only light they realize. These consequences, which agree with materialism, are in formal contradiction with the whole of metaphysics and simplest psychology. Philologists must not forget that whilst a false principle sometimes engenders true consequences, false consequences can never be derived from true principles. It does not do therefore to attach too great a worth to philological interpretations, nor to take their word for the origin of dogmas and rites ; it is not in their power to enlighten us. Philology is a science of observation, and consequently unable to solve by itself any metaphysical problem. After all, after a moment's thought, we cannot but feel convinced that the idea of God must have dwelt in us before the power to express it, else the proper noun of a divinity never could have been constructed out of a common noun or adjective. For this reason Vishnu is neither the sun nor his rays ; Agni is not the material fire which burns, notwithstanding the identity of names ; Neptune is neither the ocean nor rivers. To my knowledge there is not one passage in Homer or the *Vêda* which implies the generally accepted narrowness of the names. Vishnu is a living power, which manifests itself by its piercing rays ; Agni is a universal, intelligent, and free power,

whose visible signs are the fires all over nature, dwelling in organized bodies, warming them, ay, vivifying their very thoughts. There is not an attentive reader of the *Vêda* who does not know this, and who, if he be sincere, will refuse to recognise the spirituality of this doctrine. As for Neptune, so far from being the watery element personified by a hackneyed appellative, he is what his Greek name Poseidôn (*Ποσειδάων*) indicates, the power which gives the waters, a being superior to nature, a metaphysical conception—a god.

If this be the true nature of a god in a religion, it is clear that the expressions which designate him are not mere metaphors, and that the rites instituted in his honour have a significant and symbolic value. A supernatural being is grasped by the mind after being invoked by the voice of prayer, and brought home to us by the outward and material acts of worship. The more a religious act differs in its nature from the spiritual union of the god and his worshippers, the more symbolic is this act: thus the flame from the Christian altar candle is more symbolic than the hymn sung in the church, the hymn is more symbolic than the mental prayer which dwells in the heart with God. It is this which the Indians had perfectly recognised, and which must be brought into consideration in the history of a religion. We should not, under the pretence of philosophy, transform facts according to our systems, but, on the contrary, our systems should be determined from the sincere and intelligent study of facts. When we find that the philosophical doctrine cannot explain facts without distorting them, then that doctrine must be given up, and another applied which faithfully interprets. Only a spiritual doctrine therefore can faithfully attest to the nature of gods and sacred rites. The history of a religion would not be complete unless it traced the development of the notion of God and rite, its two constituting elements; the existing connexion between the religion and its followers, its spread, its persecutions, both inflicted and endured, its defeats and triumphs are but the historical husks—its rites

and dogmas are the grain. Now this is the simple law to which they conform; their progress is parallel: but their dogma always precedes the rite, just as thought precedes the sentiment and the sentiment precedes the outward action. The hymns of the *Rig-Vêda* agree in mentioning the names of certain personages of ancient times as the founders or reformers of the sacred rites. As regards the conception of the gods, that is to say, the religious metaphysics, the poets of the *Vêda* themselves own to the individual authorship, and even make visible attempts to throw a new light on it. The history of the development of Indian rites and Brahmin metaphysics will prove, when followed up, one of the most interesting parts of universal history: the development of Judaism will be equally attractive, above all the periods of its experienced and engendered revolutions, which led to Christianity, and later on to Islamism; still the history of Christian dogmas and worship will bear the crown over all others, because it abounds in complete documents and in records of numerous events. It is quite natural that Christianity, being the dominant religion of the West, should beguile so many of our most distinguished minds of the day. Parallelism of dogmas and rites is the fundamental law of every religious history. Consequently a defective development ot dogmas carries with it the separation of rites. When a race of men divides into two branches, each, according to circumstances, adopts a new and independent civilization. Their conception of God also undergoes a transformation, and results ensue for whose corroboration we cannot do better than turn to history. The common and primitive centre of the faith will persist, as also the fundamental rites which manifested it; but the fresh development of the dogma will gradually bring about quite a new set of rites, and in time there will be two distinct religions. Hence it is that in India and Persia national dogmas and rites, grafted on to one and the same original trunk, have given birth to two different religions—that of the Brahmins and the Magi. By an analogous secession, but with peculiar characteristics, the

Christian idea, separating itself from Judaism, produced a new worship on an old fundament—the Bible.

The separation of religious systems does not only break up human communities, it also breeds enmity among the several sections: thus an original intention of creating a religion of unity and concordant activity may sow the seeds of hatred, violence, and war. Ancient Persia, not only separated herself from the common Âryan trunk, as did the Indian peoples, but when ultimately she again met these latter, she no longer knew them as brothers; she only saw in them the worshippers of the *dêvas*, that is to say, of gods whom she disclaimed as the enemies of her supreme god Ormuzd. The Brahmins, for their part, had, by their native volition, already shaken off the old theory of the *Asuras*, or principles of life, and whilst those men who were above the sacerdotal caste were still searching into the pantheistic notion of God, the popular ideas and rites were ever turning more and more to polytheism. As a natural consequence, these two religions were a constant source of misunderstanding and controversy. And in Christianity, one single point of doctrine has succeeded in severing, and it would seem for ever, the Latin from the Greek Church. The history of heresies is similar throughout, in cases of an established dogma. We cannot disguise the fact that religion has always tended to unite men first, and then to divide them; and we know that the efforts of western civilization to bring about a union of races have ever been frustrated by the obduracy of either eastern or western religions. Shall we say that modern civilization is in herself the element of discord? Nay; but her mission of peace cannot be fulfilled till there be a unity of dogmas and worships. We shall see by-and-by how this submission to unity is to be effected.

Science finds religions in a state of separation: she immediately sets about, theoretically, to reconstitute their original unity. If such a unity be not a chimæra, then science can set herself no nobler task than the establishing of a theory for the uniting of all religious dogmas. Once science has shown that under this apparent diversity of

institutions there is but one fundamental doctrine, there will be assigned to each one again its place in the world's early history, and the hatred which has scattered the children of the human race will be appeased. If, after being studied in its universal principles, this doctrine were to be acknowledged as the true one, we might well be proud of our achievement on this debated ground; for since science never turns to the right or to the left when once entered on the path of truth, we might confidently look forward to an ultimate meeting between the mind's greatest conceptions, religion and science. Such a conviction would give us strength to refute any fresh controversies, and lift our conscience beyond any further conflicts between reason and faith. Is the fulfilment of this desire still very far off, considering the present condition and daily progress of the science of religions? I unhesitatingly reply, No. Several religions have totally disappeared, and left no traces except those found in books or monuments pertaining to worship or art, or in the popular traditions of which I have already spoken. Others have survived more or less important transformations and local developments. The natural point of departure is the present condition of faiths and worships in their respective communities, and after classing them, science proceeds to retrace their history, of course retrospectively and in due observance of their periods of development and transformation. Most histories open their pages by guessing at the origin or by making legendary statements concerning a people; but it would be a fatal mistake thus to open the history of a religion. The only reliable insight is gained by working in the paths of reduction, as chemists and physicists do. The most modern attributes and forms of dogma and worship must first be discarded and simplified, until the bare legend, if there be one, reveals the god, and the rudimentary elements come to view—elements consisting in the primeval notion of god and rite. Then shall we on all sides meet with facts which in themselves explain the local developments and disruptions of a religion; we shall, one by one, recognise the influences, direct and

complex, that conduced to make the religion what it is. I have said that science works retrospectively; were it otherwise, she would need either to open her investigations with a speculative theory, by presenting the human mind as a colourless entity gradually shaping itself into religious conceptions, or to establish a faith in a primitive and known speculation. The first course is a history *à priori*, and contrary to the demands of science; the second course is altogether outside her pale.

I know full well that the scholars of the present day are sifting every inch of ground in the history of religions; but science has not been idle all this time: her frame is ready, her canvas is rich in hues, and a few more touches will blend them into the unbroken line of ages. In other words, the principal facts are established, and their connecting links now remain to be forged by the hands of special students. Nevertheless we must confess that the affirmations of scholars are often hazarded, either because their line of horizon is too contracted and shuts out the view of facts beyond, or because the mind is more easily carried away in the heat of discovery than in the cold light of knowledge. Indeed the progress of sciences of observation is only achieved at the price of error and rectification, declaration and retraction; but the ultimate issue is scientific perspicacity.

For forty years we have watched the rebuilding of a history of religious civilization,—a civilization which had seemed to have no history, especially in the case of India, whose chronology has however been lately established by Indianists on the principles of geology: her great periods of literature and civilization making up, in a way, for missing dates. The framework being thus completed, we see the details of evidence, such as books, facts, and ideas, fitting into their proper places, and from the synchronism being firmly established, the great events in the history of India are included in the general history of the human race. Had the *Vêda* been taken as the point of departure in this restoration instead of the more recent Buddhism, science might

still be floundering aimlessly; but the comparatively modern dates were first established, and used as stepping-stones to Brahminism, and Brahminism as the high road to the *Vêda*, on which scholars have now fixed their gaze, confident of there discovering the cradle of Indian religion. A succession of fortunate chances has made European scholars acquainted with the sacred books of the Orient, and that too in the most favourable order. The Brahmin books, wherein Indian religion appears in its plenitude, were the first to be known; books on Buddhism came next, giving the first historic dates; and lastly there came to light the hymns of the *Vêda* and their commentaries, which revealed the very source of that great and deep stream. The revelation of the *Vêda* produced the same effect in the study of Indian history as might be anticipated by the discovery of the Pentateuch, supposing none but the biblical and other Christian books were known.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORIC METHOD.

These examples suffice to show the progress which is followed in its historic parts by the science of religions; yet scholars must give up the hope of attaining historically to the origin of dogmas and worships. Let us ignore, if you like, the coarse practices of many barbarous peoples, admitting that those practices have no history, and that they are this day absolutely the same as at their origin. The classing of the great civilizations puts into the first plane, among ancient peoples, the Chinese, Egyptians, Semites, and the Âryan races of Europe and Asia. And yet of all these has science failed to discover historically the religious origin, except perhaps of the Chinese religion. It were well however to set this nation apart, which, belonging to the yellow races, is in all probability anterior to the white peoples, a nation whose religion was a sort of fetichism, before men of the Âryan race had brought theirs to bear on it. We know for a fact that the existence of the Chinese dates back to a greater antiquity than that of the Semitic or Âryan races; we also know that the first religion practised by them was Buddhism. The religious history of China is thus reduced to being a branch of Buddhism, an essentially Âryan religion. In the same way one might draw conclusions with regard to the other religions which have made some progress in China; they belong to different branches of Christianity, they are only European importations with no root in the Chinese soil. More than this: though Buddhism was the first religion introduced to the yellow peoples, and though this introduction be already very ancient, the study of Chinese books has acquainted us with the

precise dates of the missions which were preached there, and with those of its first establishments; ever since, Chinese chronicles of Buddhism have kept a record of its progress, and history will be enabled to follow it up to our days. The question of religious origin can therefore have little weight with regard to China and the other yellow populations of the extreme East; not so however with the Egyptians, Semites, and Âryans.

As for Egypt, notwithstanding the increasing abundance, as it were, of hieroglyphic texts, it is not probable that history will ever succeed, in any marked degree, in solving the problem of its religious origins. Those texts which have been translated up to this day, and of which a certain number date back to a great antiquity, hold out but little hope in this respect. The existence of a very ancient symbolism might possibly be detected in it, clothed with polytheistic forms; still nothing so obscure and impenetrable as the metaphysic upon which it was founded. A local naturalism seems to have been its base, and that brings it nearer to the Greek, Latin, and Indian doctrines: but to what height did this naturalism rise? to what theology did it lead? what general compass had those doctrines which seem to hail exclusively from the soil and clime of Egypt? This we shall perhaps never be able to gather from the laconic and almost invariably official inscriptions. Consider also that hieroglyphic writing, clear enough when it states material facts, is far less so when it tries to express abstract ideas. Though it might have sufficed to men who made a continual study and daily use of it, it is not as intelligible to us, who, to unravel the sense, have only the monuments. In fact, even admitting that hieroglyphics enlightened us sufficiently on the dogmas and worship of ancient Egypt, we could not thereby conclude that we were in possession of its earliest commencements; for the use of a sacred writing, however great its antiquity, does not by any means date back to the primeval days of a race which peopled the valley of the Nile. The race, on first settling there, must have brought with it its own original ideas and institutions. In many cases it must of necessity have had

a primitive and totally unknown period, which may have covered the space of many centuries. The Semites have nothing anterior to anything related in the Bible. Now the most ancient books in the Bible are those bearing the name of Moses. According to chronologies, Moses lived in the seventeenth century before Christ. The events which came after that great lawgiver, and which are related in the other Hebrew books, are simple, and generally have a stamp of reality which permits them to be classed, if not among historic facts, still among the heroic legends whose core belongs to history. The Christian, Jewish, and Mohammedan faiths all attach the like value to narrations in the Mosaic books; but as faith differs so essentially from science, since it neither rests on the same principles nor follows the same method, modern students of the science of religions cannot consider the old narrations from a point of view of faith. Their horizon encompasses all religions at once. The home they call their own is naturally a neutral ground, from which they banish contention and ward off challenge. Of a certainty then the Mosaic statements cannot in their eyes enter into the domain of science, at least not in their visible form nor without interpretation.

The hymns of the *Rig-Vêda*, whose antiquity might well equal that of Genesis, if it does not surpass it, open very different horizons to the eye of science. The cosmogony of the *Avesta* differs totally, as does that of Hesiod, from all others. There may be incentives drawn from the faith, but there are no scientific reasons for adopting one faith rather than another; and science should welcome them all alike, conditionally on their being scientifically interpreted. Now we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that science marches steadily, and overcomes all hindrances in the shape of senseless hostility against men whose faith, based on the old Mosaic narrations, cannot radically differ from the Greek, Teuton, Persian, or Indian. If, instead of acting with passion and violence in the defence of faith, fervent Christians had shouldered the labours of science with that same calm spirit that triumphs alike over faith and reason, they

would soon convince themselves that the repugnance which many people feel towards adopting the literal Mosaic statements has nothing in common with what was formerly called the libertinism and debauchery of the mind, and that it solely springs from the necessity felt in our century of making one's faith agree with one's reason.

Our century does not recoil from the extraordinary, still less from the Divine ; but it does recoil from the impossible. Science is therefore compelled by its nature to set down many Mosaic statements, especially those contained in the first chapters of Genesis, into that great class of narrations which bear the name of myths or legends, narrations whose truth is not denied them, but whose forms require to be modified. On this score then scholars agree in limiting the historic part of the Bible to the epoch of Moses or Jarid. Beyond Moses there is no fact scientifically acceptable or capable of entering into history under the form adopted by Hebraic statements. We cannot therefore hope to find the first origin of religions in the Bible. At the time when Moses took into his hands the spiritual government of his people, and founded the powerful religious system which has lived to our day, that people was not without God nor without worship. Now, neither the legend of Abraham or Noah, nor, for a stronger reason, the myth of Abel and Cain or of the serpent tempter, can say whence sprang the idea of the Semite's God and primordial rite. The accounts of Genesis visibly allude to times long before Moses or even Abraham ; but there is nothing precise or scientific in their reports. It is quite possible that when those ancient recollections were gathered together to make up the book of Genesis, they were but the faint echoes of facts and doctrines, perhaps of much greater antiquity. I know that now-a-days certain disciples of the philological school detect in the early tales of Genesis an incomplete reproduction of the Âryan myths, so amply developed in the *Rig-Vêda ;* and they identify, for instance, the serpent tempter with the serpent (Ahi), the enemy of Indra and the personification of the cloud. From this it does not follow that all mythic

serpents of antiquity proceed from Ahi: the Semites, like the Âryans, may have composed myths and legends where that reptile figured. Moreover it is not easy to prove that these two races of men could have had any positive intercourse before the period of the kings of Israel, nor that they should have borrowed such fundamental conceptions from one another. The tale of the serpent tempter is bound up with the legend of Eden, and the legend itself with the Semitic doctrine of God the Creator. To contradict this would be to stir up against us the Jews, the Christians, and even the Mohammedans, whose religious beliefs spring from those narrations. Before establishing such assimilations, science must solve separately the problems engendered by the primitive times of the Semites and Âryans; and supposing even that part of science to be brought to a close, we cannot but admit that history loses its force at the point where facts lose their natural aspect, and that further investigations must needs have recourse to other means.

The *Rig-Vêda* is the sacred book of the races of India and the fountain of their religions. It is a collection of hymns composed in the old Sanskrit tongue, and perhaps the most authentic of sacred texts, though the names under which the authors appear are for the most part fictitious or altogether suppressed. All the scientific data prove that its earliest period is not far removed from Moses, and that many of its hymns are probably even more ancient. This point however is not of eminent importance, for the reason that the history of India proceeds by periods and not by years, at least, before the Buddhist era. When one compares the age of the Vêdic hymns with that of some of the oldest Homeric poems, that is to say, of certain portions of the *Iliad* and a few epic fragments published under the name of Homer or Hesiod, we find that the peoples of Âryan race have no monument of equal antiquity with the *Vêda;* for it is impossible to quote the book of Zoroaster, taken as a whole, a book whose utmost limit of antiquity would only touch the early days of Indian Brahminism.

Some passages of the *Avesta* appear to be more ancient than the rest of the book, without however overstepping or even reaching the antiquity of the oldest Indian hymns. The *Rig-Vêda* is an essentially religious book; the notion formed of God and the rites proceeding from it are there surrounded with that light which is wanting in most other sacred texts. Not only however does the *Rig-Veda* leave us in total ignorance as to the birth of that notion or its rites, but itself suggests anterior religions, whose duration it is impossible to estimate.

The condition of the minds reflected in the hymns is not a primordial one; polytheism, though it be the earliest form of the Âryan's idea of God, is there set forth in such considerable proportions as to have required many centuries before a race, chiefly occupied with wars and conquest, could have arrived at it. This inference is borne out by comparing the Vêdic divinities with those of the other Âryan peoples, with whom indeed they are found again, begotten by the same conception and sometimes bearing the same names. The presence of these common elements proves that a certain number of dogmas existed in the Âryan race before the separation of those branches from the primitive stem took place, when it still formed but one community of men in the valley of the Oxus. The ancient sacred rites, the altar, the fire, the victim, the invocation, were all found with the different Âryan peoples before they underwent the Semitic influence of Christianity. These facts prove less the antiquity of the *Vêda*, than the existence of a worship anterior to the dispersion of the Âryans.

At all events the *Vêda* imperatively limits the positive history of Âryan religions. If science wishes to push on, she must call upon other aid than that afforded by historians. Up to the present, there is no sacred monument more ancient than the Bible or the *Vêda*, excepting perhaps local landmarks in Egypt; but here religious history comes to a standstill. Beyond those two boundaries there extends an horizon whose outline fades before the eye of science, and even evades the grasp of imagination. We

can easily see that the periods described in Genesis and in the *Vèda* under mythical and symbolic forms suggest early and remote periods to the authors of those books; and yet, supposing it were possible along some scientific road to search out the track leading to some of the principal religious facts, we should not even then be in a position to discover whether or not we had lighted at last upon the origin of religions and worship; for either we admit that religion appeared simultaneously with man on earth, or else that it is the outcome of prolonged intellectual labour, prolonged for many centuries. In neither case however can we define the beginning. "The beginning of beings is inconceivable," says a celebrated Indian poem; "so is the end: we can only conceive the middle." This law, which is so simply expressed and which contains the germ of the whole doctrine recently brought to light by Darwin, applies to everything connected with and produced by humanity, to religion and everything else. If the first thought of a God and the first attempt at a rite date back to the origins of man, science asks, Where are those origins? Then the disputed but not refuted theory of Darwin steps forward. If anthropology does not recognise several human species, it distinguishes races, and agrees with history and comparative philology in classing them chronologically according to their physical and moral perfection. On the old continent, the white people, that is to say, the Âryans and their branch the Semites, appeared last, and they form the religious nations *par excellence*. The yellow people had come before; they had already conquered the black tribes when the Âryans from the south-east came down from Bactriana towards the Indus, along the valley of Cashmere. The black had preceded the yellow tribes, whose annals are lost in the past. Are we to believe, what is highly improbable to say the least of it, that the white received from the yellow races the first notions of religion and the elements of worship, when we remember the almost total absence of religion among the Chinese before the arrival of Indian Buddhism, and when

the poets of the *Vêda* tell us concerning the populations they found on the banks of the Indus, that they were "without a god"? Admitting this hypothesis, which everything contradicts and nothing confirms, should the yellow tribes also be made the religious heirs of the black? These are gratuitous suppositions where the ground begins to totter beneath the tread of science.

It is quite possible that the early human races may have had dwelling in their midst something bearing resemblance to religion; but if our philosophers, setting their faces for once on the too exclusive Cartesian method, would *à posteriori* enter into the psychology of the black races, we might gauge the extent of their notion of God. Perhaps we might then learn also whether in the succession of religions the white races merely mark a period preceded by the yellow and black ones, or whether our races are really the only eminently religious ones, and whether their bosoms were the first to germinate religion.

All facts scientifically collected up to this day tend towards this latter conclusion. The conviction is growing upon us in these days, that of all human races only the white will be held capable of having founded a religious system of lasting value; and that none but the most shapeless notion of God and the vaguest of theories could have existed among the earliest races. A firm belief in these propositions once established, we should deduce this inference, that metaphysical religions sprang from the white races, and that from them alone emanates an enlightened symbolism, an earnest dogma. But it will always remain unknown how these theories and their attendant worships sprang from them. We find no solution of this problem either in the records of history or in our sacred monuments. The great law of nature which insists upon all things beginning with nothing applies here in all its force. But by this it is not to be understood, that from nothing the thing appeared all at once, as by a miracle, in all its plenitude. This assumed nothing which precedes every birth is followed up by a beginning which is scarcely

anything; it is by a continuous development and by virtue of an inherent energy that the thing grows little by little and becomes perceptible to sense and mind.

Not a being, not a phenomenon escapes this law; whatever accomplishes itself in the physical order and in the moral order, the production of life and its phenomena, its thoughts and actions, are alike submissive to it. It is a mistake to think that between what we call nothing and something there is such an insuperable gulf; every mathematician knows better, and the student of physical phenomena continually meets with this law of the infinite. Nature without respite crosses those gulfs, and by slow action successfully produces the effects which so astonish us, in virtue of the law of the infinite which they obey.

Let me cite an example taken from nature. On the ramparts of Messene, constructed by Epaminondas, I have seen enormous stones lifted up by the roots of a fig tree. These stones are no less than six feet long by two feet broad and deep, each one weighing at least three thousand pounds. Three tiers had been raised more than four inches by this tree. Here is something truly marvellous, for a root that will snap in your fingers to raise blocks of stones that only the united strength of many men could move! Yet the marvel disappears after considering the matter for a moment.

A seed carried by the wind has fallen into a small crack; there it germinates, the small root soon filling the empty space. This happened, we will suppose, a hundred years ago. Suppose also that the root grew six months in the year, and rested the other six; it therefore took about eighteen thousand days to attain to full size. We know that physicians estimate the value of a certain power by bringing it down to a second, or to a pound, or to a yard as a unit. Let us carry on the calculation, and we shall find that the expended strength of the fig tree's root is extremely small, and that it does not equal the millionth part of the power necessary to raise a pound to the height of a yard in a second of time. The expenditure of strength however

having been continuous, and having uninterruptedly added effect upon effect, a hundred years produced a result which at first sight astonished us. The fig tree's power is a living power; physiological life acts in this same manner. The spiritual life obeys the same law. Who can tell whence comes that perfection of form in Minerva's temple at Athens. Was it suddenly created one day in the mind of Ictinus or of Phidias? No; those artists were familiar with models of a beauty almost as perfect as their subsequent creation; those models again having been preceded by others, and so on, till by retrospect we should light upon the most primitive styles of architecture, without any clue however as to the true and veritable beginning. But one thing we do know for certain, that no shapes were created of a sudden one day, but that they sprang, however primitive in themselves, out of the impenetrable.

If from the forms in art we pass on to the abstract conceptions of the mind, the same law repeats itself. The fund of human knowledge is growing day by day; it is impossible to name the day when any one science sprang into life: it was either the outcome of a preceding science and matured in the brain of one man, or else it was the slow and continuous work of a people or of one particular human race. Among the mind's conceptions there is none more lofty or more metaphysical than the idea of God; none therefore demands of humanity a more prolonged effort or a more persevering toil. Truly I admit with psychologists that the notion of God is the base and foundation of our sense, and I am convinced that the science of religions as well as of metaphysics is a sealed book to sensualists; but we must admit also that the notion dwells in us in a state of chrysalis. A psychologist must never forget that on the day he was conceived his body was nothing but an imperceptible particle of substance, and that his mind, which he so fully analyses to-day, was contained in that corpuscle; that on the day of his birth and for years after he never gave a thought to God or to anything metaphysical, but that at last, by dint of a continuous and insensible evolution of

his whole being, he became both analyst and philosopher. Thereupon he communicated his discoveries to men whose minds, like his own, had become gradually enlightened, and thus their united powers multiplied each other's. Then at the end of their lives their knowledge was greater than that of preceding generations. We will suppose now, that instead of having reached, as we have, this age in humanity called the age of science, certain men with reasoning minds, but still strongly imbued with a sense of nature and a craving desire to explain things satisfactorily,—supposing, that certain men had discovered among and beyond these things a hidden being, an invisible power, a mysterious intelligence, is not this the origin of a religion, one of its elements? The other element, which is the rite, comes by-and-by. It would not be scientific to inquire whether this primordial religion be true or false. That is not the question. I even maintain that, for the sake of believers, it should not be asked: for this simple reason, that the religion we believe to be the true one is based upon one that we reject. Christians call the religion of Israel false; their greatest foes are the Jews, who crucified their God. Were they to believe in their religion, they would be Jews, and not Christians. The Buddhists reject the religion of the Brahmins, otherwise they would cease to recognise Buddha as their master and saviour. Nevertheless the sacred book of the Jews is part of the Christian's Bible, and we know that the Brahmin's pantheon has passed over in its entirety to the votaries of Buddha. It does not belong to the province of science to examine the absolute value of religions, and therefore we refrain from passing judgment as to respective merits; but when science steps back into the past, and reaches that point where history and other means of investigation fail, she naturally consults the great laws of nature which preside over the development of all things, and to which humanity and its religions are subjected.

These are the principles and general notions upon which the science of religions rests to-day. By exposing them we only sum up a matter frequently met with in a great num-

ber of writings. By allotting a place to this new science, and by tracing out its course, we touch upon religions in possession of their full vigour and upon religions that have lost it. Its vast field is being explored, not by one man's brain, but by the multiplied efforts of a body of earnest students. Several of their number, especially in Germany and a few in France, are, in the eyes of pious people, proceeding to dissect with intolerable audacity the things that are considered sacred. In justice however to these men, whose devoted application to science exposes them to the harsh censure of their contemporaries, we would crave a little forbearance. I have read many of their writings, but have found no attack upon religion. It is a mistake to taunt them with being animated by the eighteenth century spirit; nay, those days are past and gone, and with them their scoffing tone, their insults and animosity. The worthless chaff of the last century has nothing in common with the golden grains of science. True scholars entertain no idle wishes to wrangle with the founders of religions, nor with their dogmas, nor with their worships, nor even with their ministers. New dogmas almost invariably disclose some new advancement in the knowledge of God; their successive proclaimers have been our great promoters; the scholars who developed them have not inconsiderably contributed to our civilization. And the present labourers in the field of science, the unravellers of so many hard knots, what have they done to draw down on their heads their fellow creatures' dire disapprobation, instead of their watchful sympathy? Are they engaged in advancing their personal interest? or is theirs the seeking after truth?

CHAPTER III.

THE SUCCESSION OF RELIGIONS.—I.

The conception of God and the rites are the only elements of religion recognised by science. There have been religions without morals, there have been some without clergy. A few disclosures on these two points will illustrate the present state of the science. If we step back, as the method requires, into the history of religions, we perceive that the application of dogmatic principles to the conduct of life is a modern act, an act which characterizes modern religions, as Mohammed's, Christ's, and Buddha's. Metaphysics cannot be said to play a prominent part in the Koran; they merely require the personal unity of God in opposition to the Christian idea of the Father and the Son. Indeed, rules of conduct and moral prescriptions meet there under the various forms of precept, narration, and parable. Watch the development of Mohammedanism either in the East or West: you will be struck with the extreme feebleness of its philosophy as compared with the powerful metaphysics in the Greek and Brahmin times.

It is fair to attribute this scientific barrenness in religions founded upon the Koran, less perhaps to the particularly moral character of the Musulman revolution than to the nature of the Semitic spirit, always inferior, in the matter of science, to the genius of Âryan peoples. This opinion, long since diffused among scholars, confirms itself more and more each day, and tends towards becoming an incontestable point of doctrine. It is a sure fact that there is scarcely any theoretic philosophy in the Semitic books which preceded

the Koran, that is to say, in the Bible and in other Hebrew writings. If we had under our notice only the succession of religions proceeding exclusively from the Mosaic, the law demonstrating to us religions which only assume a definite practical character after having alienated themselves, as it were, from morals, would lose its weight; but certain it is, that purely Âryan religions were developed by means of this law.

Buddhism in India was for several centuries confounded, as regards its metaphysical parts, with certain Brahmin schools. Later on, perhaps when Buddhism separated from them, or when it left India for Tibet, Ceylon, and peoples of the yellow race, it retained, though in a modified form, the greater portion of Brahmin symbols. From the very first day Buddha presented himself to men as the teacher of a moral doctrine founded upon virtue and charity. When his disciples met in council to compose the primitive Buddhist Church, the only aim they strove for was, not to teach men a new metaphysic, but to improve their customs which were bad, to remove from their souls all debasing passions, and to unite them in a universal sense of love (*maitrêya*). Hence sprang this proselytism, this immeasurable self-denial, which have made of those apostles the civilizers of hitherto barbarous peoples, as of Tibet and of the peninsula beyond the Ganges. Those peoples have remained very bad metaphysicians; but their morals were purged, and they began to date their civilization from the commencement of Buddhism. Hence also that spirit of religious fraternity which has given in the whole Orient so great an empire to the Buddhist Churches, which has made preaching one of the first duties of the priests, and confession an ordinary practice, and which, urging many men to the quest of an almost impossible moral purity, has populated a portion of Asia with convents (*vihâras*), showing us at this time populous cities entirely composed of monasteries.

Brahminism has offered to the moral institution far less

universality than Buddhism. We find, it is true, at a very early date even, that the conduct of men caused grave anxiety to those Brahmins who were drawing up the *Laws of Manou;* but the object of that book, which is the Brahmin code, tends far more towards establishing the base of social constitution, and of the political organization of India, than to the leading of all men, without distinction of castes and races, into the path of virtue. The law of Manou requires little of that from men of inferior condition: it is more severe upon the lords of royal caste; it imposes moral purity and perfection only upon men and women of the sacerdotal caste. On the other hand, metaphysics occupy an important place in the *Laws of Manou.* They constitute in themselves alone the first and the last book. There is more theory in that one Sanskrit work than in the whole of Buddhist literature.

Step again farther back into the past. The *Vêda* precedes Brahminism, and supports its earliest tendrils. Now morals are comparative strangers to the hymns of the *Vêda.* The Âryans of the south-east therefore began drawing from their doctrines the moral substance whose germs they possessed, during the interval comprised between that Vedic period of several centuries and the establishing of the Brahmin constitution. Brahminism subsequently fertilized those primitive data, and formulated in some sort the first practices, without however for a moment losing sight of the diversity of castes, inclinations, and functions. It was only in the sixth century before Jesus Christ that Buddhist preaching gave to practical morals a character suitable for making it a common law for all men. They even went so far with their principle as to announce to the distant future the undisputed reign of morals and sentiment among men. In fact, there is a Buddhist prophecy relative to the coming of a future Buddha, whose name is to be Maitrêya, that is to say, charity.

Meanwhile the ancient peoples of Âryan race, Greeks, Latins, Germans, had not yet emerged from the Vêdic period, nor were they undergoing the same moral revolu-

tions as those of India. When we try to-day to distinguish the moral side of those religions called pagan, we marvel at being confronted with a negative. It is quite certain that with the Greeks it was not religious teaching which gave men the rules of life, or which led them to virtue; it was the philosophers. Their biography, such as Diogenes of Laertes makes us acquainted with, proves that a considerable portion of Greek philosophy, especially morals, came from the East, whither scholars went to seek them. As for religion, that remained a public institution, to which many individual practices joined themselves; but it had no real value, except through the metaphysical symbolism at its base. When Christianity penetrated into the western world, it was the first to preach morals in the name of religion, and to make the rules of life a part of dogma. What the Christian reproached the pagan religion with was, not only the being alien to morals, but active in offering to men the example of vice. The verbal or written teachings of philosophers could not emerge from a circle girded about with learned men, and so it passed, as it were, over the heads of the people. Therefore Christianity found no moral antecedents dwelling with the western peoples. It is a barren attempt, and unscientific, to go out of the way to prove that the whole of Christian morals was contained in the writings of Greek or Latin philosophers anterior to Christ, the more so if we agree, with St. Jerôme,[1] that Christian moralists at the very outset borrowed from the dissertations of philosophers. But if even that were proved, it would not alter the fact that Christianity caused a moral revolution in the West, which extended to all men, and that that revolution adopted the

[1] "My aggressors read the Bible no more than they read Cicero. They would have found in the books of Moses and the prophets more than one thing borrowed from the books of the Gentiles. And who can ignore the fact that Solomon propounded questions to the philosophers of Tyre, and replied to theirs? The Apostle Paul himself, did he not quote in his Epistle to Titus a verse on liars taken from Epimenides? And what shall I say of the doctors of the Church? They were all nourished by the ancients, whom they refuted."—St. Jerôme: *Letter to Magnus.*

religious and not the philosophic path. This one fact solves the whole argument. It is certain that before Christianity there was not in the western world any popular moral code under a religious form and constituting a part of a faith. There was not in the religious condition of the Græco-Roman world a period of moral elaboration corresponding with Brahminism; Christianity, with its novel elements, succeeded to it without transition to earlier worships, just as though the preaching of Buddha had followed upon the Vêdic period. So Christianity bore from its very origin the character of a moral revolution. Subsequently, towards the end of the second century, it commenced unfolding its metaphysics, which, from being discussed by the Fathers with the philosophers of Alexandria, rose to the height to which those disciples of Plato and of the Orient carried it themselves. But whatever Christian metaphysics may have been, or are to-day, the true influence of Christianity and its true grandeur repose in the moral action which it exercises. Thus, the more we retrace the course of time, the more we find the religion of Âryan peoples estranged from morals. By searching either the *Vêda* or the polytheism of western peoples, none but these two essential elements of religion are found—the God and the rite. The same reduction is evidenced with regard to priesthood. There is no social system in which the order of priests has been constituted into a firmer hierarchy than in the three modern religions—Mohammedanism, Christianity, and Buddhism. Brahmin priesthood owes its continuance not to its particular constitution, which is void, but to the dominion of its castes, of which it is in a way the keystone. Brahmins are equals, and have never acknowledged one among themselves as chief. Their common origin, proclaimed by the voice of Brâhma, makes them independent of each other; not one can impose upon the other any obligation, nor give him a command. If any Brahmin acquires authority with years, he owes it to his learning, and not to any superiority in office. This hierarchical equality calls for a complete liberty in doctrines. If in India

there has been an orthodoxy, it was not the authority of a chief or any congregation of Brahmins that established it, but merely its conformity to the *Vêda*, that is, to the holy scriptures, to which alone all points of doctrinal discussions are referred without risk of incurring the displeasure of mortal authority. Freedom of thought is absolute in the sacerdotal caste.

In pre-brahmin records we find no trace of a constituted priesthood or clergy of any sort, no longer any priests distinguished from the rest of men: every father of a family was a priest at the moment when he fulfilled a sacred office, just as he was a soldier in war and a labourer in the field. It is only at the end of Vêdic times one notices the introduction of sacerdotal functions into certain families, as also royal power and military command into others. But Âryan communities had hitherto conceived its gods and practised its rites without the mediation of any organized priesthood.

The careful perusal of the *Iliad* shows us the same state of things among the ancient Greeks. There we find sacrificers appointed to certain temples, sometimes transmitting the sacred office to their sons; but side by side with this the rites were more often than not performed by hands accustomed to wield the sword, and prayers were spoken by lips which a moment after would send forth the war-cry. Agamemnon was, according to circumstances, warrior, judge, or sacrificer. Therefore the sacerdotal office was not as firmly established as later on. Judging from Homeric evidence of its undefined state, are we not right in supposing that its still more primitive condition is contained in the most ancient hymns of the *Vêda?* The developing of priesthood in India was gradual; emerging from its rough-hewn stage of the hymns, it had taken the shape of a caste in the Brahmin world. In Buddhism, caste had made room for a powerful hierarchy, of which we are still offered examples in Siam, Ceylon, Tibet, and China.

In the West, the feebleness of the Hellenic priesthood,

which rested neither upon a caste nor a hierarchy, was abruptly followed up by the organization of Christian Churches, an organization which could be taken as an exact counterpart of Buddhist Churches, if it were not known that its model was that kind of political religion of which the Roman emperor was sovereign pontiff, and that it sprang from the desire for unity so greatly felt by Christian communities at the time of their secret and persecuted existence. Needless to point out the fact that the sacerdotal hierarchy of the Christian Churches, above all, of the Catholic Church, is gaining strength each year in proportion as the authority of its head is recognised.

Well then, morals and priesthood, which are two important factors in modern religions, occupy a field whose surface visibly shrinks before our eyes as we trace back through the series of centuries. It would seem, at first sight, that Egypt offers an exception to this law, because moral prescriptions form a notable part of its ancient sacred texts. But Egypt answers in the history of humanity to a period which was on the point of expiring when those of which I have just spoken were dawning. It must not be forgotten that, dating from the sixth dynasty, dogmas, rites, symbolic figures, priestly hierarchy, and moral prescriptions, all stood fixed and immutable, though preceding records bear out no trace. This state of things suggests a very great lapse of time; it could only have arisen after an extensive elaboration.

Egypt may have contributed, though in a most restricted measure probably, to the religious development of more modern peoples, such as the Hebrews. But the great Âryan religions were founded, either in the East or in the West, before Egypt could have exercised any notable influence over them. The law then remains, and it may be affirmed that morals and priesthood appear at a certain moment in history, whose date however does not apply uniformly for all peoples. Moreover, as regards an essentially religious element, the only intellectual fact to be

found is dogma, and an outward act, worship. Since the investigation into dogmas and worships can be conducted only by means of a retrospective course of years, it necessarily takes for point of departure the present state of religions.

The first chapter of this science simply sets forth what is existing. The second opens the historic part. Now, present facts naturally receive no explanation except through facts which immediately preceded them, unless the history of humanity be considered as a series of years, uninterrupted by miracles, which is contrary to science. Human reason, reduced to its simplest formula by modern psychology, consists merely of the idea of God; only this idea cannot reach its lucidity except by a succession of analyses, which gradually disengage it from the centre where it is confined. These analyses are not wrought in a day; they require, in fact, a great deal of time. Every philosopher executes them for himself according to known methods; but humanity takes centuries to realize the least among them. At every step humanity shapes for itself a definition of God more exact than the preceding ones, for religions are subjected, as all things here below, to the law of succession and linking. A discovery can only take place when it follows upon a preceding discovery, to which it is linked, as is the glowing ember to the sparks it sends forth. The idea of God marches through centuries, always radically identical, but increasing in intensity of expression with increasing rectifications. The gods in the Vêdic hymns no longer tally with the idea we have of God, although they were worshipped for many centuries, and considered by the poets of that time far superior to those worshipped before them. The material God of the first chapters of Genesis has little in common with the God of the Christians, which is a pure and perfect spirit. Yet the most learned metaphysicians of the East recognise in the *Vêda* the foundation of their doctrines. Christians look upon Genesis as the most ancient of their sacred books, and that from which, by transmission, they

received their notion of God. It is clear therefore, and here faith perfectly agrees with science, that the belief of to-day is entitled to consideration by reason of yesterday's belief, and that in order to construct the science of dogmas we must review all the stages through which humanity has passed. But the successive growths of religious conceptions and institutions can only be explained if we constantly keep before our eyes the metaphysical fount which constitutes human reason. Still the science of religions is not the science of philosophies; the progress of this latter is a much faster one, and almost headlong in comparison with the slow and even march of sacred dogmas. Philosophic systems are the architecture of scholars, and not the evolved plans of a concentrated meditation; they only satisfy a mental desire that feels no interest in real life. Great religious movements arise in learned as well as in ignorant communities; they stir the masses, and set the sentiments chiming which animate the movement: whilst a philosophic revolution seems like child's play in comparison with a religious fermentation. The science of the one cannot be the science of the other. Now philosophers, dwelling in the midst of a religious community, whose dogmas they admit or not, as the case may be, set their arguments afloat, and win over to their side as many minds as the practicability of their solutions can interest and convince. It is quite certain that Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle exercised no immediate influence over their contemporaries; still the gradual diffusion of their doctrines removed men little by little from polytheism and prepared its eventual downfall. It required several centuries to consummate it, and this is how. The collected sum of individual ideas constitutes the belief of a people. These ideas themselves are produced by the complex and trifling actions of a thousand various causes. When the sum total of those new ideas surpasses the sum which constituted the preceding belief, an over balance ensues: this latter belief gradually makes way, and finally disappears. It must not be supposed that the religion of Christ made a clean sweep of paganism, for this latter

religion was practised two hundred years after the cross had been raised to the imperial throne of Greece. We can even go so far as to prove that many saints and Christian personages were allowed to take the place of some of the pagan gods only in cases where their names and modes of worship agreed. Numerous features of the ancient worships are even now and will be ever mingled with the elements of Christianity. All the facts that have come to light within these last few years in Germany, France, and elsewhere prove that religions do not completely throw off old notions when they succeed each other; they emerge one out of the other, like the two successive forms of an insect when it is undergoing metamorphosis, the new form gradually substituting itself for the old one. General laws like these are now admitted by all men of science, as also the consequent fact, that the latest and most universal among religions must be composed of the greatest number of accumulated elements—in other words, of the greatest number of origins. Only an ignorant or narrow mind imagines that Christianity exclusively derives its origin from the Jewish books. We know, and many Israelites delight in telling us, that the Christian religion is not wholly set forth in the Bible. Moreover we feel convinced that on its path the Christian religion must have encountered and adopted a great many Greek and Latin, and by-and-by even so-called feudal ideas.

If from dogmas we pass on to rites, we see that the great number of its elements claim an oriental source, and a symbolic signification by which the rites betray their kinship to Indian worships. But if we take a period greatly anterior to Christianity and the preaching of Buddha, we there find the great religions isolated from each other in a trackless world, or meeting and only partly exchanging some of their views. Lastly, if, after having reached the most ancient sacred records in our possession, we add to them anterior facts perfectly established by comparative philology, we shall witness the appearance of primitive religions, quite as independent as the human races with

whom they are in force. Many Christians suppose that all religions of this world proceed from one primordial revelation, of which they are only sundry corruptions. This is of course not an article of faith; but it is an idea which has greatly spread since the time when Bossuet composed his *Histoire Universelle*, with totally unsatisfactory data. Since then science has been striding. There is not a scholar to-day who considers this opinion as anything but erroneous. It is contradicted by the knowledge of texts, which disclose no point of contact between the most ancient Hebrew books and the *Vêda;* also by the comparative study of languages, which separates in their origins and in their systems the Semitic idioms from the Âryan idioms; also by the study of human races, which we find succeeding upon each other according to their order of perfection; also by the philosophic impossibility of extracting Greek and especially Indian beliefs from the monotheism of Genesis; lastly, by this simple reflexion ruling all facts, that, when humanity is in possession of a true principle, there is no example of its ever being allowed to perish. If the Christians admit the reality of a primordial religious revelation, they must come to an understanding with science, and, instead of accusing different religions with having degraded the Divine truth, they ought to regard them as human attempts by which nations gradually work their way towards Christianity.

Since the study of India, and, above all, that of the *Vêda*, has put science into the possession of the most ancient sacred book of the Âryan race, it has been possible to recognise the general progress of religions, the idea of Bossuet having been entirely given up. His book may still be edifying reading, but it no longer possesses any scientific value. In fact, the religious world is subjected to two tendencies, of which neither is exhausted. One of them is Semitic, or perhaps even Egyptian; it has its nearest origin in the books of Moses, which in their turn seem to have been inspired through Egypt: its phases are set forth in modern Christianity. The other is Âryan; its

earliest expression is in the *Vêda*, its latest is in Buddhism. The immense majority of civilized men share these two doctrines. The number of Christians is estimated at two hundred and forty millions; that of Buddhists at two hundred millions. Besides this, the communities which gave birth to these two ruling religions have not entirely forsaken their old belief. The Israelites are but slowly rallying round the notions and worship of Christians. Indian communities have almost entirely remained Brahmin, after having expelled Buddhism from their midst, only preserving one trace of it in the modern sect of the "Jâinas." From the Semitic tendency there also issued Mohammedanism, which, after being created for the Arabs, shone triumphantly over a considerable part of the old continent. The two religious currents springing from Vêdic and genesiac sources, or, to speak more correctly, from the south-east of Asia and the valley of the Oxus, have been continually traversed by three philosophic systems—that of creation, emanation, and atheism. From the absolute denial, not only of God, but of every spiritual object, atheism has never exercised any influence upon religious dogmas, has never mixed itself up in it, and has in no way altered the idea of God nor of rites. Wherever atheism made its appearance in the heart of ancient religions or in modern communities, in the former case its negative theory caused a breach between it and the adopted creed, whereas in the second case its immorality was the chief cause of its unpopularity. The ancients looked upon an atheist—that is, after the death of Socrates—as a deluded man; to-day it is a disgrace to be an atheist. At all events, atheism and the doctrines which engender it have never yet succeeded in causing any direct action or impediment on religions; neither have they rendered them any assistance. An almost universal repulsion is all they ever meet with in religious communities into which they have crept. Not so with the other philosophic systems—creation and pantheism. Both were sufficient to animate great religions in whose bosom they had been gradually ripening. But in

order to make those systems compatible on all points, history shows us, on the one hand, religions founded upon the system of creation, vivified in some parts by doctrines borrowed from pantheistic systems ; and, on the other hand, entire races nurtured in a pantheistic religion, yet adopting new doctrines about creation.

Thus, not only did successive religions shape themselves on others, but the two great roads which they followed had common points of departure, at which their metaphysical systems met. Science has proved that the original tendency of Âryan peoples is pantheism, while monotheism proper is the constant doctrine of Semitic populations. These are surely the two great beds in which flow the sacred streams of humanity. But facts show us, in the West, peoples of Âryan origin in some sort semitised in Christianity. The whole of Europe is at once Âryan and Christian ; that is to say, pantheistic by its origin and natural dispositions, but accustomed to admit the dogma of creation from a Semitic influence. This fact, which science places outside the pale of all contest, was but imperfectly touched upon by Dr. Philipson, in his *History of Religious Idea.* Not being sufficiently acquainted with the oriental origins of European peoples, he concluded that the outward part of Christian worships and the fundamental doctrine of most Divine personages are the scattered remains of paganism. He saw in Christianity only a compromise between Greek worship and Judaism, inferring that the function of Jews continues as the preservation of religious truth, primitive and pure, and that Israel is ever the people of God. According to him, the portion of Christianity which proceeds from the Greeks and Latins is destined to disappear. Thus the Christian nations would be led back to the doctrine of Moses. Wrong conclusion, drawn from an incomplete view of the real state of things ; as if nations ever turned back in anything—religions above any ! as if Christianity could ever return to its point of departure, recalling all the truths declared on the day when it parted from Judaism, and all those which it established

during the following centuries! Let it be remembered that the reformation which Dr. Philipson anticipates was attempted twelve hundred years ago, in the very heart of the Semitic races; that is, under the most favourable conditions for the expulsion of the Âryan element. The attempt produced the Koran, whose doctrine in some respects is superior to that of the Jews, but highly surpassed by that of the Christians. The Arabs and the Jews form a section of humanity whose race, whether pure or mixed, has formed its religion on the outward parts only of adopted religions. The most exclusive monotheism is the foundation of their belief. God to them, besides being the only God, is a being totally separated from the world, whose personal unity is absolutely indivisible, even in thought. It is the only human race that ever conceived God with such attributes.

When the monotheistic idea emanated from the Semitic race and diffused itself among Âryans, Greeks, Latins, and later on among the peoples of the North, it lost by its contact with them its extreme severity and inflexibility. When the Christian doctors and the Greek and Latin Fathers developed and constituted Christian metaphysics, they perfectly understood that the producing of the world and its government are not intelligible unless God is made a being less distant from the world, and consequently more conformable with the idea which had always been entertained by men of the Âryan race. It is the truth then to say, with Dr. Philipson, that Christianity derives something from Judaism, and something also from other religions. But it must be said with quite another meaning, and fully understood, that Christian metaphysics sprang from the contact with and the mingling of the two great religious currents on which humanity is rafted—the Semitic and the Âryan currents.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUCCESSION OF RELIGIONS.—II.

A FACT well known to every one is, that in the early days of Christianity there existed a secret doctrine, transmitted by means of speech, and partly perhaps by writing. This mysterious teaching in the first place excluded all those who were called "catechumens"; that is to say, converted pagans, who had not yet been instructed in matters of faith—not been baptized. They were Christians, it is true, but only in name: the profound doctrines were not disclosed to them; their transmission was entrusted to generations of men whose attributes were arduous faith and enlightened intellects—attributes that conferred the dignity of doctors of the Church, instructors and guides. And what were those mysteriously guarded points of the doctrine? This question cannot possibly be solved *à priori*, not even by studying written records. We cannot help thinking however, that the veil of mystery was thrown over those parts of the sacred science alone that would have suffered greatly from exposure to pagan eyes or even to the ignorant stratum of a Christian community.

Did there ever come a time when the hidden doctrine was a hidden one no longer? It is generally believed that after Constantine, secret transmission in any Church, East or West, ceased to be. By acknowledging the Christian religion as one of the religions authorized in the whole empire, the emperor stripped the "discipline of secret" of one of its reasons for existing; by becoming a Christian he invited the whole Roman world to do likewise, and created

an emulation which greatly contributed to the progress of Christianity. Besides this, the churches were opened to all; the flocking thither was great; it became an impossibility for deacons to refuse entrance to catechumens or pagans. However, preaching being addressed to all, it was bound to lose in depth what it gained in extent, to become popular, and take an increasing moral and practical colouring. Therefore this is the period when the Church felt the need for establishing its principles, and for founding an unchangeable profession of faith, which should shelter those principles from the inroads of ignorance and decay. Eusebius effected the historic part, and the Council of Nicæa (A.D. 325) decreed the dogma. Both tasks were aided, nay, urged, by Constantine. In order to learn the points of doctrine which constituted the secret teaching, it is not necessary to consult any monuments posterior to the Council of Nicæa, unless it were to seek documents, which may still exist, touching the primitive Christian period. Everything that was to be revealed pertaining to Christian doctrine was effectually done at the time. In fact, the early centuries abound in information of every kind, of which there are three distinctions: books; the primitive rites of the Church, now preserved or abolished; and, lastly, the figured monuments, such as abound so plentifully in the catacombs of Rome. Doctrines are sometimes more neatly expressed in the ceremonies of worship than in books, especially when their nature is mysterious: books, in fact, can only disclose the personal thought of the author, or a transmission with his own interpretation; not so with prayers, formulas of faith, and other parts of the ritual, which, from being constantly repeated in a sacred place, may justly be considered as expressing the thought shared by all. As for the figured monuments, they are naturally symbolic, and made to appeal to the eyes; they serve as so many comparisons or perfectly intelligible recollections to the initiated alone, only yielding to the vulgar the most superficial part of that which they may wish to express. When placed side by side with books and formulas, they diffuse an unexpected

light over them, and opening out an uninterrupted vista of centuries, they can sometimes conduct us to the true origins of an entire order of ideas or facts.

The written monuments appear one after the other in their natural order, dating from Jesus Christ, according as the outward events and the internal progress of Christianity permit. The study of such leads to conclusions which we sum up in this manner: essential Christian dogma did not *shape* itself little by little, it sprang at once as a whole from the teaching of Jesus; but death, which had already claimed His precursor, which overtook Him, and often threatened His disciples, caused the doctrine which He had secretly taught His apostles to be kept in hiding by them and transmitted in whispers to its principal votaries.

From this obscurity, in which they preserved it with the utmost vigilance, it only emerged in fragments, according as circumstances permitted. In fact, it was only entirely promulgated when growing heresies threatened to pervert it.

The four gospels, the Acts, the epistles, and several other writings of the primitive times of the Church, mark its several stages. The discipline of the secret lasted until the day upon which manifestation could be regarded as completed; *viz.* towards the end of the second century. Then the publication of the Gospel according to St. John first showed, under its theoretic form, the doctrine which Jesus had confided to His favourite disciples. Therefore it required nearly two hundred years before the Christians, who were spread over the empire, were in full possession of the great formulas of their faith. The first form under which it was suggested is that which Jesus exclusively used in His public teachings, the form of parable; it is about the only form used in the Gospel of St. Matthew, the oldest of the four and the most faithful echo of Jesus' own words. Theory begins to show itself in the Gospel of St. Luke, the second in date. This new book offered a strong contrast to the first by suppressing the Jewish element in a systematic way, which Matthew, the mouthpiece of Peter, had strictly

preserved. St. Mark contributed scarcely anything new, either in the history of the Master or in the expression of doctrine; his gospel was perhaps published in order to draw the Judaising Christians, of whom Peter was the head, to the Greek and Roman Christians, for whom St. Luke had composed his.

What event could have happened that produced such a secession, at one time dangerous, in this rising Church? Only one: the preaching of St. Paul. Paul was not a disciple of Jesus; being a merchant Jew of Asia Minor, his trade called him to the place where his co-religionists were stoning the unhappy Stephen, himself taking part in the crime. But by a sudden resolve he embraced the new religion. Possessing its mysteries, he planned for himself the mission to do among the Gentiles what Peter had done among the Jews of Jerusalem; he evangelized them. However, Paul's position in the midst of a Greek community was not the same as Peter's in Judæa. Those apostles who dwelt among the Jews were restricted by the Mosaic law and by the spirit of the people to a silence which they could not break with impunity, whilst the Greeks enjoyed a freedom of thought which many modern nations might envy. Since the founding of Alexandria and of the Museum, there reigned in the matter of religion, as in everything else, that independence of speech without which nations can make no progress. Paul therefore met no obstacle to his preaching except in his own race. He thought that the moment had come to deliver over the secret science to all, he preached it in the streets and on the housetops. The Church, whose centre was henceforth in Rome, did not welcome it, because the chiefs who governed it were judaisant, they only looked upon Christianity as a more complete application of the law of Moses. Every one has heard of the strife which arose between St. Paul and St. Peter. The Church of Rome was at that time constituted like a synagogue, and animated by the spirit of Israel. The doctrine of Paul was expounded by St. Luke in that gospel known as the Gospel of the Gentiles, as that of Matthew was the Gospel of the He-

brews. Soon after the two great apostles were martyrized. Upon this, an abridgment of the last two gospels was brought out as the Gospel according to St. Mark, with a view to a favourable combination between Jews and Christians, for whom at this moment an indiscriminate hatred was felt. The doctrines of the Master, which the apostles and doctors of the Church had turned into mystery, the ignorance in which a common believer was kept, had called up arbitrary interpretations in the rising Church, at variance with the doctrine of the secret. They became so powerful as to oblige those who preserved the last concealed formulas to divulge them altogether, in order to restore the true tradition of Jesus and of His apostles. These latter were all dead; the second century was running its course, when the first version of the Gospel according to St. John appeared, a work filled with Âryan ideas and contrasting with the semitism of Rome, where it was probably published. From that time forth one may look upon Christian manifestation as completed, and admit the nullity of secret teaching. Beyond doubt however this teaching lasted yet some time. At that period books did not circulate as rapidly as in our days; the Churches already counted a great number of adherents dispersed nearly over the whole empire. Moreover the Gospel of St. John might itself be the object, if not of opposite interpretations, still of explanations more or less deep, and attainable according to the intellectual capabilities of the catechumens.

Teachings were then of two kinds: the popular form of narration and parable for the ignorant, and the figured symbols and the apostles' direct doctrine for the better informed. This distinction lasted whilst the meetings of the Christians were clandestine or simply tolerated; it only ceased after the edict of Constantine, when it became impossible to exclude any worshipper from the churches.

We see by this short statement that the Christian dogma fully existed in the mind of Jesus, but that it was only delivered by portions and by successive publications, both voluntary and premeditated. Nevertheless, if it be true

that the canonical books emerged one after the other from the mystery in which they were kept, the form in which we possess them is not that which their authors had given them. For instance, the Gospel of St. John had been first composed in Armenian. The text as it left the hands of the apostle never reached us, and has probably never been published integrally; was the translation which was given to the public towards the end of the eleventh century, and which criticism attributes to John the Elder, the exact reproduction of that text? No; because the fragments quoted by the authors of the first century do not reproduce the texts of that gospel as we have them. It is quite probable that the primitive texts, preserved in the secret, were only published after having undergone such modifications as circumstances required, to serve as answers, in fact, to dissentient opinions as they came out. And whence came these alterations of the texts? Evidently from the individual spirit and unflagging energy of the masters. For when the canonical texts had all been published, and with them the secret doctrine, the spirit of the doctors and of the Fathers persisted in tampering with the fundamental dogma, perhaps not with a view to alter, but certainly to effect more liberal interpretation; for without a doubt the dogma is explained in a most succinct manner in the holy books, and is open to many comments. In the Catholic Church, dogma was only firmly established by the Council of Trent, and ever since that period it has undergone fresh developments. As for the rites, which are also part of religion, and whose meaning was also kept secret, they are not yet outside the pale of changes and additions, which are happening every day under our own eyes.

It is true then that the doctrine of Christ transmitted itself secretly into the primitive Church, but it must not be said with equal assurance that this was the case with the whole doctrine, and that it remained intact during its transmission, experiencing neither alterations nor developments. There is a happy medium between the opinion, which admits of nothing new in Christianity during the first two

centuries, which sees only the integral transmission of complete dogmas, and the opinion of the critical school, according to which everything is new, the doctrines and the books.

Jesus had two teachings: one public, proceeding by parables and only applying the practicable part of dogma; the other was secret, or *esoteric*, only given to the disciples, and not entirely to all, only to Peter, James, and John. Jesus did not pretend to be the author of that hidden science; but urging the religion of the heart against the superficial religion of the Pharisees, He reproached them with holding in reserve the science of which they held the trust, and of closing the kingdom of heaven to men. That kingdom could only be opened to all by the Messiah, the Son of God; the Divine filiation of the Messiah was a part of the secret doctrine, whereas the ordinary Jew only expected a terrestrial Messiah, a king-prophet, a descendant of David. In public, Jesus called Himself the Son of man, an expression which neither of the Messiahs could have claimed. When Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, and when the other disciples had also acknowledged it in Him, He forbade them to speak of it to any one. As He advanced in His career, the Messiah's character in Him became more and more apparent to His disciples; but the masses at most only saw in Him a prophet and a man of extraordinarily powerful science. The fear and antagonism of the Pharisees however grew from their traditional knowledge of the theory of the Messiah; they dreaded to see it realized in Jesus. It would be misjudging the Founder of Christianity to suppose that in preaching His doctrine He willingly sought the meeting with dangers and His death. He suffered death, but did not court it; the supreme consciousness which He had of His destiny did not make Him shrink from His last agonies. Applying to Himself from the very first the "theory of Christ," He accepted death with that ineffable gentleness which no man has equalled, when He found that His mission could not be fulfilled without His dying; but during His whole preaching, His

disciples saw Him exercising personal prudence often greater than their own, and delivering over to them alone a mystery which the Jewish people were not prepared to hear. In His last moments He avowed, almost against His wish, in equivocal terms, His sonship to God, an avowal which His enemies declared to be blasphemous.

Had He proclaimed this mystery at the outset His mission might never have been. The prudence which He so often shows in the gospels precludes every exaltation of His person and only enhances His gentleness. Jesus died then without having divulged the secret theory, without which His mission was inexplicable and His religion an impossibility. But the sacred texts are so formal that the very appearance of doubt on this point must vanish. From this time forth the progressive apparition of the mystery unfolds itself like a drama, which commences at Peter and only clears up at the Gospel of St. John. Of Jesus only His public preaching and His miracles were known; His life was almost entirely vested in obscurity, and His death struck with astonishment those who had been its participators and witnesses. And as for His inner thought, that was likewise a sealed book; they only knew that He had a mysterious doctrine, in which an extraordinary part had been assigned to Him, whose trust He had delivered over to His dearest confidants. Those, who were called His disciples, and whose number is supposed to have been eleven, if we exclude Judas the traitor, were not the first who appeared on the scenes after the death of Jesus. They continued to dwell in Jerusalem: being Jews and struck with terror at the death of their Master, being subjected to the Mosaic law, whose administration was in the hands of their enemies, they cherished their secret, and only confided it to a small number of believers; publicly, with Peter at their head, they affirmed that Jesus did not wish to overturn the laws; they took part in the public ceremonies and supported circumcision. Stephen was the first loudly to disclaim that the law of Moses was the new faith. Being a Greek, probably from Alexandria, he went about

Jerusalem, saying, with the inherent liberty of his race, that the old law was a figure, and that the time had come when the image was to make room for reality. He declared that Jesus was the Messiah, that is to say, the Christ, the Christ of the word of God; and that he had himself seen the glory of God in the heavens, with Jesus Christ placed on His right hand. This first manifestation of the secret fell on stony ground; Stephen was stoned to death by the Jews; Saul, who was Paul, was among them. The disciples dwelt on in Jerusalem, without making any confessions as to the secret doctrine; they remained judaical. But the scattered Christians spread themselves abroad; one of them, Philip, a Greek probably, but not the same as the disciple of that name, preached in Samaria, performed miracles, and converted a great many people, among whom was Simon, one of the disciples of Philon of Alexandria: so that the first advances in Christianity were not due to the disciples, who dwelt peacefully in Jerusalem.

Now the horrible death of Stephen and his angelic prayer so filled his assassins with remorse, that Paul turned convert on his way to Damascus, and himself set about preaching the doctrine of Christ. Through what channel had the doctrine reached him? We cannot say for certain. Paul never knew Jesus, and only met His disciples seventeen years after his own conversion; they met in Jerusalem. He was born in Tarsus, a city of Asia Minor, one of the two great centres of theological philosophy, of which Alexandria was the other. For master he had had the Rabbi Gamaliel, who was said to have been secretly baptized by John the Baptist, and who defended the disciples in Jerusalem. Gamaliel's father was Simeon, son of Hillel. Hillel, the first of the three doctors of that name, was born at Babylon at the commencement of the century; he was a Pharisee; he founded a celebrated school, and sustained against the famous Shammaï the oral doctrine, which was carried on by the secret teaching, in opposition to Scripture, whose study he had himself mastered in his native city. Surely this was one of the channels which conveyed the

secret theories to Paul, of which we shall speak presently; then his trade placing him in communication with men of every doctrine and of every country, he probably recognised the identity of that which he had learnt from Gamaliel, with the doctrine of which Jesus' disciples kept the secret. Of this doctrine he had caught a few words from the lips of poor Stephen.

He saw and disapproved of the too prudent or resigned conduct of the disciples. At this time a gospel attributed to Matthew, and written by him in Hebrew, or rather Syro-Chaldæan, was circulating among the believers. It was composed for the Hebrews of Palestine, and faithfully represented the thoughts of Peter and his manner of teaching the new doctrine. It did not step beyond the preaching of Jesus, but confined itself exclusively to narrations and parables, leaving the foundation of things undisclosed and the secret doctrine upon an impenetrable background. We can easily convince ourselves, by our version of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, that if Christianity had only followed along that road, it would never have been anything beyond a moral reform of Judaism, and would never have become a universal religion. Paul, recognising this fact, imposed upon himself the double mission of proclaiming the secret doctrine "from the housetops" and to the Gentiles. He therefore preached "another gospel," which however was "not another"; a gospel which he thought would totally differ from the preaching of Peter, for it unveiled a doctrine "hitherto secret since the commencement of the world"; a gospel which was however precisely the same, for its doctrine in no way differed from the one that Peter had received from Jesus, and which he was withholding either from weakness or obstinacy. The preaching of Paul was like a second appearing of Christ, a revelation of His nature, His Divine origin and supreme thought. From this antagonism sprang the strife which only ended in Rome shortly before the death of the two apostles. Peter defended the judaical tendencies; Paul assailed them, saying that the Jews were deluded and that

the Greeks alone were wise, loading upon the Jews the entire guilt of Jesus' death and absolving the Romans. The question at issue between the two was therefore, whether the new doctrine should be continued in Jerusalem, languish for a time, and then die, or whether its embers should be fanned into a tongue of flame and rise as a beacon to all nations.

Facts decided in Paul's favour; for, while Peter was presiding in Jerusalem at the head of a few men, who had not yet a distinctive name of their own, and who were called *Nazarenes*, from the origin of Jesus, Paul was founding at Antioch the first real Church, and those who gathered round it took for the first time the name of *Christians*. The doctrine of Paul is known to us by various documents, of which the chief ones are his epistles and the Gospel of St. Luke. The epistles are authentic, with the exception of one only, the Epistle to the Hebrews, due in all probability to a converted Jew, an Alexandrian, named Apollos, whose authority found equal weight in the scales with Paul's. Luke was the disciple and travelling companion of Paul. The manifest purpose of his gospel is to throw disbelief upon the earlier writings relating to Jesus, to make the most authentic among them harmonize with each other, to disclose their insufficiency, and to complete them with the secret doctrine revealed by Paul. The comparing of the gospels of Luke and of Matthew discloses a vivid contrast. Everything which in this latter appears favourable to the Jews or to the Mosaic law is suppressed in St. Luke. Matthew preserves the passover; Luke suppresses, and replaces it by another celebration, where no lamb is sacrificed, and where the victim is none other than Christ Himself. The kingdom of the Messiah is Jewish and material in St. Matthew, it is spiritual and universal in St. Luke. The God of Matthew is the Father, seated in heaven upon a throne, as the chief of the chosen people; the God of Luke is universal, He dwells in each of us, and we dwell in Him. Luke describes the ignorance and hypocrisy of the Israelite chiefs, but he has no bitter words for

Pontius Pilate; by him Herod and his soldiers are made substitutes for the Roman soldiers, it is they who deliver Jesus over to martyrdom. Matthew commenced tracing out the genealogy of Jesus to Abraham, and thus made Him a Jew, son of David by Joseph; Luke traces it to Adam, son of God and father of mankind. In his eyes Joseph is only a supposed father, the real Father of Jesus is God, who chose Him to be crucified by the Jews. In Matthew were to be found the wise men of the East, the star, the flight into Egypt, the massacre of infants: in St. Luke there are no more massacres, no wise men; Joseph the Jew disappears from the scene, and in his place rises upon the foreground Mary the Galilean, of a race probably apart from Israel, a model of holiness and blessedness, whose purifying virtue is felt by all who approach her. This Mary is to-day acknowledged to be identical with the Mâyâ of the Indians, who is the universal feminine principle, and who was the virgin mother of Buddha.

The account of Jesus' birth at the break of day, of the drawing near of the shepherds, of the angels singing, "Glory to God on high," makes in St. Luke a picture of oriental and almost Vêdic harmony, contrasting marvellously with the narrow spirit of the Sadducees and even Pharisees. In Galilee among Gentiles Jesus received baptism and Christ revealed Himself to John the Baptist. According to St. Luke, he baptized with water, awaiting the time when another should baptize with the Spirit and the fire, a new rite, differing from the Hebrew baptism of St. Matthew. Luke tried to reduce the authority of the apostles by omitting all the words of Jesus which confirm that authority in St. Matthew; he deprives the twelve of the boast of having founded the religion of Christ, by counting among their numbers seventy messengers, whose mission is contrary to the most authorized Israelite usages. "Go your ways," says the Master: "behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes: and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.

. . . And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give."

Luke makes evident allusions to Paul, and declares him to be the first among the apostles. When Paul was persecuted, Luke remained faithful to him, at a time when all others betrayed him. In fact, the oldest Fathers of the Church, Irenæus, Tertullianus, Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, all identify the thoughts of Luke with those of Paul.

The facts we have just quoted clearly show that Jesus was the founder of Christianity; Paul was its diffuser. He disentombed it from Jerusalem, and planted it among the nations.

We must now just retrace a few paces, in order to view the dissentient opinions, which had arisen in the Churches under cover of the secret which shrouded the metaphysical doctrine. The fundamental discussions had reference to the nature of Jesus in relation with the *theory of Christ.* We have seen that even the Jews conceived the future kingdom of Christ in two ways. Some were expecting a king of the line of David, who should fill the earth with a Mosaic theocratic power, and place the people of Israel at the head of a vast empire in a lineal descent from that king. Others again, and among them the Pharisees, took the kingdom of Christ in an ideal sense. That question was much discussed, as we have already seen, during the previous century, among the Jewish doctors Shammaï and Hillel; the coming of Jesus, His preaching, His life, and His death greatly complicated it. Some acknowledged in Him a Son of David, a future King of the Jews; but His dying without having established a kingdom dispelled their hopes, and they now awaited that second advent of Jesus glorified, of which He had Himself so often spoken to them. Others were confirmed in their doctrine; regarding Jesus as the Christ, they especially discovered in Him the Son of God, and little by little they strove towards the suppression of His human nature. It is seen from the gospel of St. Matthew, from the Paulian reaction, and from the testimony of the homilies, which define the doctrine of the

apostles under the name of *Clementines*, that the first doctrine was that of Peter and the Judaisers. In the time of St. Paul, the second was manifested. The first symptom of it may be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews, commonly attributed to Paul, but doubtless written, as pointed out before, by Apollos to the Christian Jews of Alexandria. There reigned in that city such a freedom of thought, as to alter with the greatest ease the canon of the Scriptures, and often to introduce individual interpretations into the doctrine of Jesus. We know scarcely anything of the primitive Church of Alexandria, unless this, that she in a considerable degree contributed to the growth of Christianity and to the progress of her dogmas. Apollos not only declares himself in decided opposition to the Mosaic law, but, appealing to the Indo-Persian doctrine of the incarnations, he maintains that Christ is in no way human, that He is purely the Son of God revealed in human form. He reproaches St. Paul for not disclosing the entire secret, and for keeping the most important elements to himself. Therefore, in this Epistle to the Hebrews, the first formulas of the doctrine are found, which were afterwards called *docetism*, from a Greek word which means to seem, because the body of Christ had, according to that doctrine, only a semblance of reality. And this doctrine was rearing its head in the very midst of the apostolic period. The epistle wrongly attributed to Barnabas marks the second division in docetism; it comes after the Epistle to the Hebrews and before the Gospel of St. John. Its author belonged to the Church of Alexandria. Like Apollos, he looked upon Christianity as of new creation, with no roots in Judaism; he denied that Jesus was the Son of David, and His humanity. This anti-semitic doctrine did not long remain concentrated in Alexandria; it rapidly spread to the other Churches. Apollos' conception produced quite a schism when taken to Corinth. In order to refute it, Paul had already written his first to the Corinthians; but when his own opinion did not prevail, they soon received a second letter from Bishop Clement, of Rome, testifying to and

lamenting over the existing division among them, warning them against false masters, who acknowledged neither Paul nor Peter, and inviting them to emulate those two apostles, who were at last reconciled after having been divided for some time. The letter of Clement proves that docetism reigned in certain Churches of the East at the end of the first century, the time when it was written; but it also proves that the Church of Rome was exempt from it, and that, even if Paul's doctrine was not the only one in force, at least the Jewish influence was on the wane. *The Shepherd*, a book by Hermas, brother of Pius, bishop of Rome, appeared about the year 130 or 140. It was like the continuation of the letter of Clement and of the Gospel of St. Luke. Though it did not very much surpass St. Paul's expounding of the secret doctrines, it had the advantage of spreading them in the Churches, of settling a great many of their points, of searching them, and, above all, of placing them clearly face to face with the denials of Christ's divinity or humanity. Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, all considered this writing canonical; and we may look upon it as forming, in the manifestation of the secret, a link in the chain which binds St. Paul to St. John.

Notwithstanding the interest of the subject, we will not compel the reader to follow us into the writings of Ignatius, of Polycarp, of St. Justin, nor across those *recognitions* and *homilies* which bear the name of *Clementines*, and which describe the doctrine of the apostles. We have arrived at that beautiful work of a disputed author, called the *Epistle to Diognetius*. It is nearly contemporary with the *Shepherd* of Hermas. Its style is beautiful, especially when compared with the writings of the early Christians. Its eloquence is constantly sustained by a loftiness of thought and a preciseness of doctrines, to which the *Shepherd* does not attain. If Marcion was its author, it must be confessed that his opinions were greatly changed at the time when, in Rome, in the presence of a Church already firmly constituted, and in presence of dogmas which St. Paul had

previously clearly defined, he became the chief of a school which positively denied the humanity of Christ and His existence in the flesh : for the letter to Diognetius has quite an evangelic character, and is free from docetism ; it is merely the renewed affirmation of the secret science taught by Paul ; lastly, it is a perfect introduction to the Gospel of St. John.

After the lapse of scarcely thirty years, a Docetist of Babylon, Tatien, published the *Harmony of the Four Gospels*. The Gospel of St. John was therefore known at the time, and its appearance can be placed between the years 160 and 170 of our era. Meanwhile Marcion, assuming the shape of an antagonist of Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, maintained, seemingly with right, that the God of the Christians is not that of the Jews, that Christ is not their Messiah, whoever their Messiah be, that Christ is universal ; but he added that Christ was never incarnate, except it be in appearance, that the Jews at Capernaum only saw a phantom before them, that He did not suffer on the cross, and that He could not have died. Marcion was not acquainted with the Gospel of St. John, but he adopted that of Luke by altering it according to his own ideas. A great part of the Christians rallied round the opinions of Marcion, which an elegant style and a persuasive eloquence rendered very credible ; the doctrine of the secret was endangered to its very foundations. It was then that the Gospel according to St. John appeared, the last and the most metaphysical of the four narrations which compose the evangelic canon. Any Paulinian might have written it ; but probably it already existed, and was known to the Christian doctors, for several axioms are quoted in the *Clementines* and in the theological writings of Hippolytus,[1] of the first Tatien, disciple of St. Justin, of the Christian philosopher Athenagoras, and of Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, whose *Apology* was composed in the middle of the second century.

[1] See an essay on Hippolytus by M. A. Reville in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of June 15th, 1865.

Peter, James, and John were the three favourite disciples of Jesus, and naturally His three most intimate confidants; but, as best beloved disciple, John must have been the one to whom Jesus confided His whole secret. His gospel, written in Armenian, had to be translated so as to be understood by the followers of the doctrines of Marcion, of Ebion, or of Cerinthus. As the exalted life of Christ was a Divine mystery, John was able to relate it in that language by placing himself at once on a lofty point; but the time when it could be understood only came when controversies had prepared the minds, and after the actual life of Jesus had assumed the colouring which comes with time. Therefore to the Gospel of St. John we must look for the decisive formulas of Christian metaphysics,—formulas which St. Paul himself had but incompletely revealed, and whose Asiatic colouring will strike every one. The sequence of this work will require that these formulas be briefly summed up. St. John admits that the Divine Word was known long before Jesus, that It had always lived, that It gives light to every man born into the world, that It was God's mediator in creation, that It became flesh, and that It took a dwelling *in us* (*habitavit in nobis*). God is one and indivisible. The Word is His only Son, His glory, His light; It reveals to men the things of heaven. The Spirit is God; being incarnate, It becomes Christ, firstborn of creatures, the means of sanctification to men.

The love Divine is the saviour of the universe; for by it God gave to the world His only begotten Son, and by his communion with Him man becomes, like Him, the child of God. Justification comes by the grace of God, that is to say, by His direct influence on us; and expiation comes, not by the works of the law, but by justification.

The Comforter, which Jesus promised His disciples, is none other than the Spirit of God, which, under the name of Christ, dwelt with them, but not yet in them, and which at Christ's leaving, when they were delivered over to themselves, was henceforth to dwell in them, and by them cause men to do the works of the Spirit. In St. John we

find the *theory of the eternal Christ*, anterior to Abraham and to Adam, exposed for the first time in its authentic form; but side by side with this doctrine we find the humanity of Christ clearly avouched, His incarnation in Jesus, and the reality of His life and death.

CHAPTER V.

THE SUCCESSION OF RELIGIONS.—III.

We have now to do with the problem of the origin of secret dogmas and of their transit to Jesus, which transit is best represented by the books called the Apocrypha.

The first author we meet contemporary with Jesus is the Jew Philon, of whom we possess some voluminous works. In Hebrew community it is he who effects the blending of eastern and western ideas. His method does not permit the Jewish writing nor the religious traditions of Greece or of other peoples to be taken literally. But neither does he mean to pass off his method of interpretations as a new one; he had it from the Alexandrian Jew Aristobulus, and we have proofs of its early use among Greeks from more than one pagan author. The God of Philon is not only the architect of the world, like Plato's god, but is also the creator. His first production is the Word, image of God, first-born of all creatures, type of man, Adam celestial. The Word, born before all worlds, is the Son of God, neither equal to nor identical with Him. Philon explains the theory of the incarnation and the function of the Word in man in the same terms as others given after him. Just as with the Christians the Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the lifegiver; and just as the Word dwells in νοῦς, which is reason, the Spirit dwells in ψυχή, which is the living soul. Philon admits and explains the fall of man and the need of a Saviour: that Saviour is always given to each of us by the grace of God; but in order to perfectly accomplish the resemblance of humanity with the Word, the fulfilment of time is required, because, taken

by itself, the Divine Word cannot descend to the earth, it dwells for ever in the glory of God.

It is needless to point out the profound analogy between these doctrines and those which John learnt from the Master; it is curious however to find them explained a hundred years before Philon with nearly the same expressions in the Book of Enoch. That apocryphal writing, which is not to be found in the Christian Bible of St. Jerome, nor in the Hebrew canon of Jerusalem, is Palestinian, composed quite at the end of the second century before Jesus Christ. It could not have been known to Philon; for the doctrines found therein are those which existed in his time in two affiliated sects, the Essenes of Judæa and the Therapeutics of Egypt, sects whose ideas accorded with Philon's; Philon reproduced them just as the early Christians, who were long confounded with the Essenes, did after him.

The Book of Enoch conducts us in quite a straight line to the Alexandrian Apocrypha, that is to say, to the books contained in the Septuagint, and which were not part of the Hebrew canon. The two most important ones are the Book of Wisdom and the Ecclesiasticus. The first has been attributed, though wrongly, sometimes to a friend of Solomon, sometimes to Sŏlomon himself; it is greatly posterior to that king. The second is older, and was composed by Jesus son of Sirach, who lived in the pontificate of Simon, at the beginning of the third century before Christ. Besides these two essential writings, it is of vast interest to search in the Septuagint for passages of the Hebrew canon which were altered by the Greek translators. The fact that those alterations were made systematically, with a view to making the Hebrew books harmonize with the Apocrypha, becomes quite plain; and the sequence is, that while the books of the Hebrew canon are united by the Mosaic law, the Septuagint seeks its unity elsewhere, in a doctrine, which in many respects is in opposition to that law. The Greek bible, in fact, always strives to separate God from the visible world, and to give the Messiah an eternal and

celestial nature. That separation calls forth the theory of mediators, among whom the Messiah is spoken of as the greatest. In the two apocrypha before mentioned, the two theories contradict one another. Here, God is declared one and invisible; the firstborn among creatures is the Spirit, which is also the Word, the mediator, the principle of holiness and immortality; the Word itself, formerly represented by the name of *Kabôd*, as a luminous apparition in the centre of a cloud, which rises up like a pillar, turns into the *Séchina*, which dwells within the holy of holies, —the science created before all worlds, which can never die, perpetually present with man. It is the pantheistic theory of the inherent Word, of the "God with us," which the apostles Paul and John at last revealed to the western peoples.

Besides the Scriptures, there was in the Levant also a secret doctrine, verbally transmitted to certain dissentient schools, whose identity with the doctrine of the Apocrypha has been brought to light. The guardians of that tradition were, during the centuries preceding Jesus Christ, the two sects which we mentioned before, the Essenes and the Therapeutics. The former dwelt in Judæa, principally on the shores of the Dead Sea. They were very numerous; notwithstanding the progress of the new Church, they still numbered four thousand at the time of Josephus. They had a method of allegorically interpreting the Mosaic law, which did away with the official interpretations of the rabbis, and instituted a universal priesthood in place of the caste of priests. They never taught their secret doctrine in public, and never spoke except in parables. Their moral law, like that of the Buddhists, had for its basis abstinence, charity to others, the equality of men, and the annihilation of slavery. A firm bond united them to the Alexandrians. They knew their books; among them was one called the Science of Solomon, with which they were familiar. The Essenian doctrine and its oral transmission therefore make a path, which leads from the doctrine of the Apocrypha to the secret doctrine of the Christians. The Therapeutics

of Egypt were a counterpart of the Essenes of Palestine; they were, like them, a sort of anchorites, of a perfectly oriental character. They lived in monasteries, commented upon the law and the prophets, composed and sang hymns. They prayed at the rising and setting of the sun; at their matins they turned to the east, asking to be illumined from within; at holy sacrifice they substituted bread and water for the lamb, thus abolishing the bleeding immolation. They had profound symbols, and they searched for the *science of the secret.* Eusebius and St. Jerome looked upon them as Christians; but Philon makes of them a Jewish sect, and Philon must have known what they were. The origin of those two sects however is not known. We meet the Essenes in the history of the second century before Jesus Christ; but at that time they already appeared to be a very old sect, in opposition to the Sadducees, and imposing upon themselves the task of preserving a secret and oral tradition, different from the Mosaic tradition, and one destined some day to take its place.

Besides this, we know from Eusebius, from St. Epiphanius, and from St. Jerome, that such an oral tradition existed among the Jews long before the second century, transmitting the same ideas which were subsequently adopted by the Essenes, by the Therapeutics, and finally by the Christians. Now if we attentively study the books of the Hebrew canon, no trace of that doctrine will be found in it, unless it be in the Proverbs, attributed to king Solomon. But that book is of doubtful authenticity; it is made up very often of sentences without connexion, and might therefore have been the sum of every imaginable interpolation. All the canonical books of the Old Testament, except the three minor prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, are mentioned as coming before the captivity of Babylon. The last twenty-two chapters of the book attributed to Isaiah are contemporary with this event, and were written by an unknown prophet, at the time when the Israelites were returning again, in the year 536 B.C. Jeremiah and Ezekiel were the last who prophesied, when in 586, under Neduchadnezzar, the temple

was destroyed and the Jews carried away to the heart of the Assyrian empire. It was therefore during the period which followed upon the destruction of the temple that the secret doctrines and sects were formed among the Israelites which transmitted these doctrines down to Jesus.

Now their formation can only be explained in two ways—as being either an inward and spontaneous impulse of the Jewish spirit, or as a foreign influence. The first explanation is unlikely; for these doctrines being in formal opposition to the Mosaic law, the first man to emit them would have been confronted with powerful adversaries among the Sadducees, who were the preservers of the law, and the struggle must have left some traces in history. Not so when a foreign motor gradually works upon separate individuals, who would remain quite irresponsible. Such an influence might well have been exercised upon the Israelites during the fifty years that they spent in contact with the peoples of central Asia. We learn from the great unknown prophet of the captivity, that the edict of Cyrus recalled the Israelites from every part of the Medo-Persian world over which they were scattered. When that king had conquered all western Asia and taken Babylon, they regarded him as a liberator; they judged him worthy of being called the Christ of God, while at the same time they heaped curses upon their former oppressors. Naturally a bond of friendship and gratitude, and consequently an exchange of ideas, took place between them and the Persians, not only in Babylon, the centre of the captivity, but in other corners of the empire. We know that henceforth the intercourse never ceased between the Israelites and the Medo-Persians; nay, that it was increased, by reason of Judæa being situated between the Persians and Egypt, one of their possessions. This state of things lasted up till the conquest of Alexander, who stirred up all Asia, opened new roads and channels for fresh absorptions, and soon concentrated in Alexandria the ideas and doctrines of the entire world.

Since the secret doctrine dates from the captivity of Babylon, and did not spring from an inward and spon-

taneous impulse of Judaism, it only remains to be seen now whether there existed such a doctrine in the Persian community; and this the orientalists of the present century have enabled us to do by placing in our hands the sacred books of Persia which were in use at the time of the great Darius, of Cyrus, and their predecessors. These texts, of which a popular Greek translation existed more than two centuries before Jesus Christ, are known to everybody as the *Zend-Avesta*, and are attributed to Zoroaster, the ancient legislator of the Âryans of central Asia.[1] In it is to be found the entire doctrine of the secret, in almost the same terms as those used by St. John. There is no possible doubt but that from thence it was transferred to the Hebrews; for at the time of Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Daniel, though a Jew, already receives the title of *Rab-mag* (Master of Magi), and occupies the first place among the priests of the Âryan religion. Why however did this national religion only produce a hidden doctrine and a mysterious sect among the Jews? For the reason that this people's entire religious constitution, political and civil, emanated from Moses, a religion which could not admit of a foreign one without destroying itself. Hence after the captivity, the sectarians lived apart from the Israelite community, until the time of Jesus, who gave, by His life and His death, an irresistible impulse to their ideas. Then were those ideas propounded by the mouth of St. Paul among the Greeks and Romans, and were, by the pen of St. John and his translators, drawn up into a code for the new community.

The *Zend-Avesta* contains the whole metaphysical doctrine of the Christians: the unity of God, the living God, the Spirit, the Word, the Mediator, the Son begotten by the Father, principle of life in the body and sanctification of the soul. It contains the theory of the fall and the

[1] A first and very incorrect translation came out at the end of the eighteenth century by Anquetil Duperron. Eug. Burnouf was the first to discuss its texts, to give the key to the Zend language, and to expound a part of the *Avesta*. For a complete edition, with translation and commentary, we are indebted to M. Spiegel, whose ideas have been criticised or completed by the works of M. Martin Haugh.

redemption through grace, the initial co-existence of the infinite spirit with God, a sketch of the theory of the incarnation, a theory which India had so amply developed, the doctrine of the revelation, of the faith of the good and bad angels known by the name of *amschaspands* and of *darvands*, of disobedience to the Divine Word residing in us, and the need of salvation. Finally, the religion of the *Avesta* excludes every bloody expiatory sacrifice; which religion, having once been adopted by the Israelites, did away with the slaying of the paschal lamb and replaced it by an ideal victim. This course was followed first by the Essenes and Therapeutics, and subsequently by the Christians. The above statement rests on facts whose authenticity cannot be doubted, therefore let us sum them up. At the time of the Babylonian captivity the Persian religion, whose dogmas are contained in the *Avesta*, engendered among the Jews a secret sect, whose doctrine, transmitted by oral tradition, manifested itself, however incompletely, from time to time. The sect appeared in the second century before Jesus Christ, known as the Essenes, and in Egypt soon after as the Therapeutics, a body of religious men who lived together in convents. The doctrine first appears in the Ecclesiasticus of Jesus son of Sirach, in the Book of Wisdom, and in the alterations of the Bible made by Greek translators and called the Septuagint. Both sect and doctrine had greatly unfolded under the Ptolemies, when the contention between Hillel and Shammaï brought them to the fore in the first century before our era. The secret doctrine, partially altered and reduced, had found its way into the books of the Hellenic Jew Philon, who lived in Alexandria at the time of Jesus. And this doctrine Jesus secretly imparted to His disciples, especially to Peter, James, and John, bidding them keep it in reserve for better times, while He, by His preaching, would prepare men's hearts for it. The apostles were keeping it secret in Jerusalem, after the manner of the Essenes of bygone times, when Paul, who was acquainted with it, took upon himself the mission of spreading it among the Gentiles, or rather principally

among the Greeks and Romans. This doctrine, which St. Luke collected, only gained a footing in Rome after the destruction of Jerusalem and after the deaths of Peter and Paul. The ignorance however in which the early Christians had been kept gave rise to dissentient and detrimental opinions; some (the Ebionites) denying the divinity of Christ, others (the Marcionites) disputing His humanity. But the Church was firmly established, the moment was propitious for the publication of the secret; and so, in the middle of the second century, the Gospel according to St. Luke was conferred on the believers, written in their native tongues. The mystery had been kept for seven hundred years, a space of time which prepared the western peoples for the new principles of their faith, Asia's legacy.

I do not think that, as the result of our study, any one of the above conclusions can be seriously contested, seeing that they are all drawn from the most precise, comprehensive, and authentic texts, from generally recognised facts, and from the most unquestionable data of modern science. The consequence we may deduce is, that Christianity as a whole has an Âryan doctrinal tendency, and comparatively little in common with Judaism as a religion. It was, in fact, instituted in opposition to the Jews, and always upheld as such by the early Christians, who defended their religion at the sacrifice of their peace and their lives. If Christianity were the mere outcome of Mosaism, its primitive history and the ulterior destiny of the Jewish people would be inexplicable; it would be impossible to understand how the Israelites could so long have been the oppressed of other nations, especially of Christian nations. The steady lamp of history however clears up the minutest details of that long vista; it reveals the early transmission, the development in Alexandria and elsewhere, the living incarnation of the doctrines in the person of Jesus, the life and death of that great promoter, the terrors and struggles of the apostles, the mystery with which the primitive Church surrounded itself, the lofty philosophy of the Greek and Latin Fathers, oriental in its colouring as contrasted with

the Græco-Roman systems, and lastly the prodigious establishment of a Church whose dogmas, rites, constructions, institutions, and influence have welded and forged together all the nations of the western world. Science can therefore discern what in Christianity belongs to the Semitic or to the Âryan current. Christian monotheism, with the idea of the creation as its consequence, has certainly a Semitic origin; for neither the individuality of the absolute principle, nor the doctrine which makes the world rise out of nothing, have ever at any period appeared in Âryan religions; there is not even a term in Sanskrit which signifies *to create*, in the sense in which Christians apply it. It is known however at what time and under what influence the trinity of the Divine Persons was theoretically discussed and definitely established; it was at the time when the school of Alexandria was unfolding its theory of *hypostases*, a term which was adopted by the philosophers of this school, as by the Christians, to signify what was called in Latin the *Persons* of the Trinity. Between those and the Alexandrian hypostasis the apparent difference is very slight, the real difference very great. The Christian doctors never lost sight of the individual unity of God the Creator, such as they had received it from the Semitic tradition, nor the conviction that the Persons of the Trinity were and could only be the several aspects of that God, equal respectively and collectively with regard to the fundamental unity. That doctrine however required to agree with the doctrine of the incarnation, which the dogma of the Semites was too narrow to admit. The creation, the Trinity, and the incarnation of the Son under the human form of Jesus, constituted therefore a dogma in which the Semitic element and the Âryan element met without mingling.

The Alexandrian philosophy, on the other hand, is exclusively Âryan; for it springs from Platonism and from the doctrines of India and Persia, which had fermented in Alexandria for four hundred years. Pantheism admits neither the individuality of God, separate from the world,

nor the potentiality of a creating action for raising life out of nothing. Yet, on the other hand, an absolute being cannot develop itself by virtue of the law of emanation, unless it first assumes that second shape to which philosophers have given the name of hypostasis. The diversity of those hypostases does not permit any one of them to equal the absolute being in whom they reside; it is their *sum* which equals him. Again, when each hypostasis develops according to the same law, no single one of its modes is equal to it; it is only equalled by the sum of its modes.

We see now with what restrictions the doctrine of philosophers exercised its influence upon the early development of Christian metaphysics, and how opposed these latter were both to the Alexandrian pantheism and Semitic monotheism, notwithstanding their reciprocal affinities.

As for the incarnation, that constitutes the point of dogma which to this day causes the greatest breach between Christianity and the Semitic religions. In the Bible God *inspires* the prophets, in the Koran He inspires Jesus and Mohammed; but for God to become *incarnate*, it is requisite that He contain several hypostases: this is the formal opposition between the Âryan doctrine and Semitism. Christian orthodoxy has never relinquished its rights on that ground, but firmly maintained them: the doctrine of the incarnation is the foundation of Christianity; whoever refuses to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus Christ is no Christian. The history of heresies shows with what energy the orthodox dogma shook off all those who only appeared to compromise it. The whole western world would therefore need to renounce Christianity in order to yield that important point to the Jews; in fact, cease to be Âryan, and strain at an impossibility. It is easier for a man of our race to acknowledge the incarnation of God in human shape than to conceive the prophetic inspiration in a Jewish or Mohammedan sense: the former is a metaphysical theory, which bears discussion and may ultimately be established; the latter makes of God an oriental king, a man who imparts his secrets at his free will, and who lacks the traits which our

race has always acknowledged in the eternal Being. The belief in biblical prophecies has lost much of its strength in our century, and it may vanish altogether without greatly endangering the Christian doctrine—perhaps even prove an advantage; but the belief in Christ's divinity will prevail, because it is conformable with the Âryan spirit and quite tallies with the doctrine of emanation and with that of a God creator. These are, in short, the only two metaphysical systems of distinction in mankind.

The two tendencies to which the better members of the human community are submitted gather without doubt beneath the banner of Christian metaphysics, making a truly universal religion of the religion of Christ. The real Semitic beliefs, on the other hand, spring from one belief exclusively, to which the name of monotheism has been given—an ill-chosen name, for at heart Âryan pantheism admits the unity of God no less so than the doctrine of the Jews or the Arabs; only that unity is differently understood. All exclusiveness in Semitism has had two consequences, which history unfolds to us thus: in the matter of religion, the Semites have kept themselves aloof from all foreign influence; they propagated their dogmas to outsiders only by violence. The Jews never attempted to convert other nations; they rejoiced as privileged beings, superior to other men in their own estimation.

The growth of Islamism belongs to political and military history rather than to the science of religions. It spread itself among peoples of Âryan origin in central Asia and India, as well as among the yellow populations of several countries of Asia; but only with the sword did it conquer, and by force retain. The people who embraced Islamism were ever after noted for the violent energy which animated them, and it became the most prominent trait of their character; and that which may be said of the white or yellow races semitised by Mohammedanism is particularly applicable to black races. Christianity then inherits its natural gentleness from the Âryan race amongst whom it grew and unfolded itself, and not from any lingering element

of Semitism. Intolerance, of which it is sometimes accused, does not exist at the fount of its dogmas or in its spirit, which is a spirit of meekness. Whenever Christianity resorted to intolerance it was in contest with the temporal power; the careful study of history leaves no doubt on that point.

The duality of origin visible in Christian dogmas is also found in the rites. The history of the Christian ritual has never been written, so that science, in this respect, is far from being complete; all that has been said on the subject anterior to the discovery of the *Vêda* is insufficient, and we can here only indicate and trace out the path which science may try to follow. The book has yet to be written.

Science must of course start by giving a complete table of the practices in modern Churches, by classifying their rites and distinguishing, according to orthodoxies, between those rites which are accessory and those which are fundamental, rendering to each one its purely authentic interpretation. Then it might go on to the history of the ritual. That history, like that of dogmas, will have to be written retrospectively, its present condition affording a safe ground of departure. But this chronological retrospect would only run smoothly till it encountered the most formidable of obstacles—the impenetrable secret of origins.

If the Christian rites spring from the gospel, the gospels are not, as far as rites are concerned, primitive books either, but graftings upon the Hebrew ritual. Genesis therefore should be the point of departure, for it answers to the obscurest and, in a way, most mythological period of the Hebrew people. But we must keep in view the many proofs we have to-day, that a considerable portion of the Christian rites comes from sources that are neither Hebrew nor even Semitic; admitting which we cannot proceed without establishing certain facts at this early stage of our investigations and out of all chronological order. Let us start from our present point of ritual and follow the line retrospectively, we shall perceive a certain simplification, a gradual falling off of rites, as it were—their origins,

and, lastly, their very sources. But a course like this one does not resemble the aspect of a stream whose bed is always prominently visible, however numerous its confluents; it may rather be likened to a pond, whose invisible springs divide and subdivide themselves into an infinite network of channels. The present condition of our rites is, so to say, at one extremity of those channels and their sources at the other.

This method, when applied to the study of Christian rites, distinctly shows that they are not of Semitic origin, though connected with the Bible and with Hebrew practices. Others however were practised by the Jews before their transmission from the Jewish worship to the Christian. Thus certain great feasts of the year have Hebrew names, certain sacred objects in our churches are relics of the ancient law. Still almost every part connected with the holy sacrifice—the altar, the fire, the victim, all the tokens of the dogma of incarnation or its legend, and such attributes as the temple, the tolling of bells, certain priestly garments, the tonsure, the confession, and celibacy—are symbols and usages whose origin must be sought among other races than the Jewish. The like must be said of prayers and utterances recurring in most of the sacred ceremonies. Those which are not taken from the Psalms or other parts of the Bible are fired with no Semitic spirit; many of them strongly resemble in nature and form the chants of another race, to whose writings I am referring. Several pre-christian documents testify to Buddhism having been known thus early in the south-eastern corner of the Mediterranean. Hellenic Jews called Buddha Philon; the doctrine of the *Samanai* of India, who are none other than the *Çramanas*, or disciples of Buddha, was acknowledged and renowned in Alexandria and in all eastern portions of the Roman empire. The Bible is not the only foreign book of which Greek scholars were cognisant at the time of the Ptolemies.

The founding of the Museum, at the instigation of an eminent professor of the early days of the Egyptian king-

dom, Demetrius of Phalerus, had created a home for study, where the doctrines and often the sacred writings of all religions then known were handled with a scientific freedom such as our schools have not yet exercised. At the time when the Christian rites were springing into life within the precincts of the secret and clandestine gatherings of the early Church, Buddhism had already existed for six or seven hundred years ; its doctrine and rites, its hierarchy, emissaries, were to be found in every corner almost of the world. On the other hand, it is certain that the *Vêda* was known to the Greek world before the coming of Jesus Christ; in the Alexandrian poems published under the name of *Orphics*, there are verses translated word for word from certain hymns of the *Vêda*, containing names of divinities which never belonged to the Hellenic pantheon.[1]

The ceremonies on Holy Saturday, attendant upon the replenishing of the fire, not only bear a most pronounced Vêdic stamp, they also include orations which could be easily changed into Vêdic compositions if the words *Aryans* and *Dasyous* were substituted for *Hebrews* and *Egyptians*.

Encouraged by such facts, we cannot with impunity reject whatever new suggestions may present themselves to us. At Berlin the university theory prevails, that a considerable portion of our rites comes from India; but this assertion seems rather premature and gratuitous in the present absence of scientific support. We sincerely hope however that the time is approaching when an established science of rites will enlighten many points. Without doubt, Christian rites spring from more than one origin, as do the Christian dogmas.

There is a theory, based upon the observation of general facts, maintaining that rites always follow upon dogma, as

[1] Ἄττιν καὶ Μῆνα κικλήσκω: Aditi and Mêna of the hymns. The worship of Mêna towards the era of Jesus was spread over the entire empire, reaching from Persia and Egypt to Sunium and Strasburg, as numerous inscriptions have proved. The worship of Mithra was quite as widely spread; others too, but none more so than Orpheus. In the Musée Lorrain there is a bas-relief of the Christian Orpheus, which was found at Laneuveville, near Nancy.

the symbolic and visible exponents. Once this theory is admitted, we easily fall in with the foregoing statements respecting Christian rites.

The Hebrew rite arose out of the Hebrew dogmas, which were established soon after the return from Babylon, in proscription against all foreign religious influence. The double origin of those dogmas and rites, in addition to the lofty doctrine of Persian origin, caused the bitterness with which the Israelite saints inveighed against the corruption of their religion and the introduction of Egyptian worships. Now the early Christians laid the foundation stone of their religion upon ground equally neutral to all nations, and founded a truly universal worship in the adoption of the humane elements of Judaism to the exclusion of all others, and in the adoption of Âryan rites, whose noble symbolism agreed well with the new dogmas. But who can say what space of time was required for the welding together and the final harmony of those complex tendencies? It would be a mistake to suppose that Christian rites and dogmas were not shaped till Jesus commenced His mission; they were indeed manifest long before that period, but His appearance, His life, and His death gave the first impulse to and fulfilling of desires which for ages had been dormant in men's hearts.

Hebrew rites emanated from Hebrew dogmas: they were ordained soon after the return from Babylon, and thenceforth took so firm a root as to forbid the influence or coercion of any other races. The twofold origin of those dogmas and rites, and the preserving of the superior doctrine brought away from Persia, account for the invectives used by the saints of Israel against introducing alien worships, and, above all, those of Egypt. The early Christians took their stand upon a neutral ground opened to all nations, and founded a really universal worship by adopting only the humane dispositions of Judaism and wedding them to the system of Âryan rites, which they practised, and whose noble symbolism was well suited to the new dogmas. Nevertheless this double tendency did not at one stroke

produce those effects. It would be a fallacy to suppose that the commencement of dogmas and Christian rites had been reached at the time of Jesus' preaching. They both date farther back; but only in Jesus' time the hitherto silent demands of the old and the new wants raised the cry. Men only become aware of a revolution when it has broken out; science however calmly traces out the record of facts and their effects which on accumulation kindled the revolution. The Christians of the early centuries were filled with the enthusiasm of their dogmas and symbols; these however, from being proclaimed publicly and adopted by many, lost much of their force. The antagonism of the Alexandrian Fathers and philosophers more and more increased the importance of the Semitic element in religion, and induced the Church to adopt the dogma of the creation almost unreservedly in its narrowest sense; and this dogma gradually dimmed the significance of the rites and symbols.

Now-a-days the meaning of rites is scarcely understood by any one, not even by the priests, who perform and preserve them; their origin is generally a mystery. And as for dogma, which is the sum of the purest and most humane philosophies of centuries, it has been banished the field of lay philosophy. The philosophic school with which M. Cousin's name is connected, wrapped up in the study of human thought, and admitting without explaining a dogma of the creation as absolute as that of the Jews and the Musulmans, has no longer anything in common with the Christian doctrine of creation by the Divine Persons. By attributing the creation of the universe to an absolute Being, which does not admit of virtual multiplicity under any form, the school claims conformity with Judaism and suggests a more incomprehensible miracle than that of the Christians. The result of it is, that the dogma and worship of Christianity undergo one of those crises to which all religions are liable when a philosophic system invades them. None but the Semitic tendency concentrated in philosophy could have produced the ruption; for the Âryan tendency, in science as well as in religion, has always inclined towards

the theory of the Divine emanation. The twofold influence with which the birth and growth of Christianity was pervaded makes it a more difficult study than the two Semitic religions. Its inherent Âryan element is not easier to distinguish in these modern days, under its European and anti-semitic aspect, than it was in the early centuries under its oriental garb. The estrangement between the two elements of the doctrine could only come about after the discovery of Indian books, which at once revealed the relations between the eastern and the Græco-Latin world, and penetrated to the origins of mythology. There is in Christianity a very important symbolic part, which would for ever have remained inexplicable but for that discovery; for the Hebrew doctrine, from which the other part is derived, excludes, as it were, all symbolism and assumption of human attributes. The same darkness once shrouded the ancient religions of Europe, which could never have stepped forth into light except through the medium of the *Vêda* and comparative philology. But no sooner were the scrolls of the *Vêda* spread out and read than the mists rolled away and scales fell from our eyes.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUCCESSION OF RELIGIONS.—IV.

Up till a very few years ago mythology was looked upon as a collection of fables, a record of highminded deeds and poetic creations with which the ancients enlivened their writings and adorned their buildings and gardens. We all know Boileau's judgment upon "tous ces dieux éclos du cerveau des poètes," and the advice he offers to rhymesters and to artists. In the light of sacred conceptions they were called false gods, and their worship paganism or idolatry. Whilst Christianity, in the first flush of enthusiasm, was yet wrestling with the spirit of antiquity, the Iconoclasts, a sect filled with the Semites' sense of exclusiveness, were passing the same judgment by going about breaking their rivals' images. When however the master spirit of the Âryans took the lead, a less severe sentence was passed on images and symbols; modern taste took possession of the pagan gods for the purposes of art, but their originally religious attributes were forgotten, and thenceforth they only served as the embodiment of poetic allegories. Contemporary science seems in her turn to adopt that course. We have heard of great nations in the East, of the same race as ourselves, still worshipping Greek and Roman gods. We know that Buddhism, which in many respects resembles Christianity, has collected those same divinities into a sort of pantheon; yet the word idolaters cannot be applied to its adherents. Scholars have even succeeded in discovering the origin of those same sacred figures by diving into the past and to the source of their symbolism. It was the great impetus of the Âryan spirit whose volition created

the last three great religions. First, the Vêdic, with the Greek, Latin, and Norse mythologies; then Brahminism, with its Persian branch, Mazdeism; and lastly, Buddhism.

From the history of religious revolutions we learn that the western mythologies retained their primitive attributes almost intact through centuries, and finally merged their elements with those of Christianity. In order therefore to make a fruitful study of the career of Âryan religions, we should direct our energies to Asia. Mythologies explain themselves by comparison with the dogmas of eastern worships. As for the stray legends that may have been preserved in the popular traditions of Europe, they would be quite unintelligible but for the *Vêda*, for the reason that the Âryans of the South-east lived entirely without western connexion from the time of their first arrival in Asia until the propagation of the Buddhist faith. The chain which towards the centre of the mountains of Asia sweeps away from the diaphragm of Dicearchia and runs southward to the sea separates the Indian from the western provinces. On the north the Himalayas rise as an insuperable barrier. The only possible means of overland communication between India and the West is towards Attock, and opens into the Oxus. That was the Âryans' passage when they descended upon Sindh (the Sindu of the hymns). The earliest known intercourse by sea between their descendants and the Semites dates back to the kings of Israel before Raamah, the hero of one of the great Brahmin epics. That intercourse was exclusively commercial, and probably never extended beyond the limits of Ceylon. Up till the sixth century before Christ, when there came at last that great Buddhist revolution which had long ago made itself felt, Brahmin religions had always been free from outward influences, except in a very few cases in which poetic legends rather than sacred ones had penetrated, like the story of the deluge, for instance. Science regards it as an indisputable fact now, that Buddhism flowed from an inner and spontaneous source into the Brahmin civilization. The Siamese ambassadors who were sent to the court of Louis

XIV. of France were Buddhists. Interest was at once awakened in the religion of these men, who seemed quite civilized, and upon inquiry the name of Samanacodom (in Sanskrit, *Çramana Gautama*) was found to be none other than Buddha. The extraordinary resemblance between the Siamese and Catholic religions led to the supposition that the former had sprung from an early Christian sect, from the Nestorians. The ultimate acquaintance however with the Buddhist books of Siam very soon rectified this mistake. Subsequently the manuscripts of Nepal, brought over to Europe, and the discovery of Tibetan and Chinese Buddhism, proved beyond a doubt that Buddha Çâkyamouni had preceded the Nestorians by nearly a thousand years, Jesus by five and a half centuries, the founding of Alexandria by more than two centuries, and the first republic of Rome by fifty years. We know what were the attributes of Buddhism; we know that it sprang from a revolution of manners and customs, and not from any radical change of doctrines. From this aspect alone can science take in at a glance the full import of that great religion. Though metaphysics (*ab'id'arma*) constitute one of the three parts of the collection of Buddhist writings known as the *Tripitaka*, it would be as unjustifiable to judge of Buddhism from that point of view alone as it would be to disregard the moral and civilizing influence of Christianity. The theory of *nirvâna*,[1] which has been made an essentially Buddhist question, was expounded by the Brahmins long before the coming of Çâkyamouni: it is therefore not a primary one.

The same may not be said of the rules of those morals which Buddhism taught, of the moral purity, of humility and

[1] *Nirvâna* means extinction: *jwalam nirvâmi*, I extinguish a flame by blowing on it. Applied to man, *nirvâna* may be taken to imply the total annihilation of that creature. In that latter sense it is but the absorption into God either through trance or death; in the former, it is space suggested as being the end of existence. Much may be said on this head. But let me remark that the idea of *space* as well as that of *creation* is foreign to Indian minds, likewise to all doctrines founded on the principle of emanation.

universal charity—its fundamental precepts. Its achieved success, outside of its Indian home, with the yellow races and in Oceania, its long branches reaching westward into the Greek world, and round again by the eastern ocean into North America, is only accounted for by the moral influence which it diffused. Its expulsion from India was caused by the antagonism felt towards the enforced equality between Brahmin and other castes, and the right with which all conditions of men could aspire to the priestly functions and obtain them. In fact, the morals of Buddhism form its metaphysics, of which they are a new application —metaphysics which are pantheism conceived in its fullest compass, and comprising all real or ideal beings into one hierarchy, where man may attain unto more or less exalted altitudes according to his wisdom or his merits. But these two human attributes are not arbitrary, like those which shape the character and legitimately distinguish men from each other. The Buddhist theory only set them up after the ripest and as yet unsurpassed psychological analyses and ethic considerations.

Thence are derived all the practical consequences which make of Buddhism one of the most morally influential religions. Orientalists are daily bringing to light fresh evidence of bonds existing between Buddhist morals and metaphysics, and again between this latter and its forerunner Brahminism. Already we may scientifically aver that the religion of Buddha sprang, by a natural evolution and without foreign influence, from the Indian spirit, and as a spontaneous consequence, from pantheism. As a rule none but a very imperfect idea is ever formed of Buddhism in the light of a moral institution. Its system is this: it is the great development of a hierarchical priesthood, spreading north into Tibet and China, and south to India and the islands; it is a spiritual power like the pope's, once upon a time incorporated with the temporal, but now independently exercising undisputed power, and, as in the kingdom of Siam, reigning side by side and in the same capital with another king; it is a worship which in parts surpasses the

pomp and splendour of Catholic ceremonies; it is an expansion of the monastic element which far outshines the convents of Spain and Italy; and, lastly, a number of rites and practices akin to the Christian religion. All these, I say, are but the outward features which must strike even the least observant. We shall now always consider this statement as an established truth, because the spread of Buddhism first promoted the code of laws to which thenceforward the entire religious spirit of the Âryans conformed; also because it reconciles the most exclusive theories of Europe with pantheistic morals. This theory, which was first successfully expounded by Jouffroy in a course of the *Droit Naturel,* has been taken up officially, and is now taught throughout France. So far from wrangling on this subject, we will throw on it the full light of recently discovered oriental facts: the result will prove the flattest contradiction to which an *à priori* doctrine has ever been exposed. One course or the other must be the right one: either the peoples who for twenty-three centuries accepted the metaphysical theories as well as the moral precepts of Buddha have been guilty of the most flagrant inconsistency of practices in their daily doings, or else the pantheistic doctrines do not bear out the inferences that French theorists felt justified in drawing. The existing incongruity in a system which some philosophers look upon as founded, and in a theory which has lasted so long and embraced such numberless populations, has been attributed by orientalists to the hitherto absent familiarity between these philosophers and pantheism. Abstract theories, be they to all appearance ever so rightly deduced, can never boast the same worth as experience; and it is experience which the Buddhist Orient has presented to us on so gigantic a scale.

The second halt made by the Âryan spirit in Asia is marked by two great antagonistic religions, the Persian and the Brahmin. The former throve for a long period on its own principles, without undergoing from its contact with non-Âryan peoples any important change; therefore its

original forms should now be sought in the books attributed to Zoroaster. The *Boundehesh* and the *Book of Kings* (*Schah-nameh*) of Firdouci, which bear posterior dates, already offer abundant legend and even beliefs, whose origin is not by any means Âryan, and which came from Assyria or Chaldæa, or from more southern countries. Before the substance of the *Avesta* was translated and expounded by the scholars of our day, the pantheistic disposition of the Persian religion had, as it were, not been noticed; the only striking part had been the outward symbolism of its worship and the dualistic appearances presented by the myth of Ormuzd and Ahriman. Since then the fact has come to light, that the latter personage is far from being able to rank with his rival, that his legend does not at any time represent him as eternal, nay, not even as immortal, but that he is destined one day to disappear. As for Ormuzd (*Ahura-mazda*), science no longer considers him solely in the personal form given him by legend and worship: the study of Zend writings has proved that from a far more abstract metaphysical conception does he derive his absolute and universal being, such as he is found to be in all pantheistic systems of the East. It is not owing to its metaphysical basis that Mazdeism found itself in conflict with Brahminism, but certainly owing to its symbolism, being the most conveyable feature to the people's minds; also owing to worships which emanated from and mould themselves upon symbols, and owing to a peculiar tone which worship always causes in civilization.

With regard to the origin of the Medo-Persian race and religion, European science was confronted with a grave hypothesis, no doubt a probable one, but not demonstrated by any clear, authentic writings, until the appearance on the scene of the Vêdic hymns. At the time of Darius' and Xerxes' invasions, Greece had already adopted her enemies as her friends. The beautiful allegory will be remembered in which the poet Æschylus in his tragedy of the *Persians* represents Persia and Greece as two sisters harnessed to the chariot of the Great King. Subsequently the kinship

between these two nations consummated itself in Alexandria through the alliance which took place in their doctrines. The introducing of Persian worships and those of Mithra[1] into the Roman empire, seemed to suggest also the existence of a certain affinity between these religions and those of the West. Only in these latter days however has it been possible to follow up the progress of religious ideas belonging to that important portion of the old world. The road to it was opened by the study of Sanskrit; origins were descried by the discovery of the *Vêda*, helping us to realize in the religion of Zoroaster one of the most noble and original productions of the Âryans' pantheistic spirit. As for Zend literature, even with its acquired complements, it is on so limited a scale as to preclude any possibility of its offering to the science of religions any documents comparable with those furnished and promised by India. Though only a few among them are attributable to any fixed dates ranging over a period of five hundred years or more, they nevertheless shed ample light, and give a panoramic view, as it were, of the history and evolution of the Brahmin doctrines. Brahminism contributes two remarkable, and in some respects solitary, features to the history of religions. First, it has survived a great religion of its own creating, Buddhism, having itself undergone such intestine transformations as to produce a series of distinct religions; secondly, as already stated, it partly contributed to the budding and first evolution of Christian

[1] *Mithra* (in Sanskrit = *Mitra*) is a form of the sun. This form principally answers to the equinox of spring. The figure adopted in the Roman empire, of Mithra slaying the bull, indicates that at the time when that symbol was created the equinox took place when the sun was in the constellation of that name. The approximate date of that period therefore could be determined by means of the precession of the equinoxes at the rate of 52″ a year. The figure 4200, or thereabouts, is obtained, which sums up the likely date of 2300 B.C. It was however the moral value of the worship of Mithra, who was thought to be a mediator and a saviour, that chiefly effected its diffusion in the empire. As for the inscription, *nama sabasio*, often found on the basreliefs of Mithra, it does not seem to be Greek. *Namas* means honour, worship; it is a formula that appears in most eastern books; thus it would mean worship to Sabasios.

thought in Egypt and in the eastern portion of the Roman empire.

The birth of Christianity destroyed Judaism. The dispersion of the Jews, the destruction of their temple and of their holy city did less towards reducing them to their present state than the religion of Christ, though it had been cradled in their midst. The metaphysics of an antiquated school, joined to the lofty moral sentiments of a prince, who feels within himself the craving for a public reformation of customs, gives rise to a new religion, in the very heart of India, in the balmiest days of Brahminism.[1] There rises up a Church (*saṅġa*), fired with a spirit of proselytism in the midst of a community which had no Church, and had never attempted any conversion. The reform met with the people's acclamation, their condition was raised; kings welcomed it for its friendliness to their privileges; and many Brahmins accepted it for the sake of its pure morals. However the newly enforced sinking of the Brahmin to the level of the çûdra, the indiscriminate bestowal of priesthood upon any and every man, caused the Brahmins, the preservers of castes, to arm themselves against the new religion; and after ten centuries of troubled existence, Buddhism was for ever driven out of India.

In no way however did Buddhism alter the notion of God to the Brahmin's conception, and consequently inured it to no new rites. Its Church and its powerful ecclesiastical organization never attempted the establishing of a more exalted religion: Buddha was not looked upon as a god, nor as the incarnation of any divinity whatever. In Brahmin India, this reform could only be dreaded as a revolutionary attempt to suppress, or at any rate weaken, the government of castes. By substituting a priesthood, which was recruited from the lowest stratum of the community, for the hereditary priesthood of Brahmins, who

[1] *Çâkya* the *mouni*, that is to say, the solitary, was the son of Cuddhôdhana, king of Ayôdhya (Oude), himself king and heir presumptive to the crown. He was therefore of the second caste, that of the Xattriyas, and did not belong to the Brahmin priesthood. The ancient school connected with Buddhism is that of Kapila.

were pure Âryans, and whose families dated back to the Vêdic times of the invasion, Buddhism dealt a fatal blow to the castes, and provoked a social revolution in India, compared with which our western revolutions are but child's play. Then the usual unfortunate sequence followed: the reform of manners had to give way to State considerations; hence the survival of Brahminism. It is easy then to trace, in the order of centuries, the march of religious ideas and the growth of worships in Brahmin India, from this to the first day of their origins. This history forms the counterpart to Semitic religions; the monotheism in Genesis, transmitting itself from century to century, has only undergone secondary modifications; its history, in a way, reduces itself to the purified notion of an individual God, a notion which cannot grow nor alter, nor engender anything outside its scope. Whereas the pantheistic conception once having sprung up in the minds of the south-eastern Âryans of a universal God, dwelling in the heart of the universe, could in its practice adopt many varied forms and create new worships.

In fact, one of the fundamental notions of pantheism is that of the incarnation: he who doubts the possibility of an incarnation is no more a pantheist than a Christian. In Indian theory, which early soared to its utmost confines, the absolute unity of the Being has been considered as the base of metaphysics. That absolute Being is not a creator, nor the father of the universe; for those attributes suggest an active and self-born power, above which it is possible to conceive something else still which admits of no duality. Brahma is the axis upon which the entire Brahmin metaphysics revolve. His name is neuter, to signify that he is not the father of kings; and indeclinable, to show his total isolation, whence he is absolute. The three forms which composed the Indian trinity in comparatively modern times *trimûrti*, are Brahmâ, Vishnou, and Çiva, and may be looked upon as divine persons; to them might be applied all that the Alexandrian philosophers professed in their theory of hypostases. Brahmâ, who is the active

force of the absolute being, lives and acts in the universe, of which he is called the *father*, the *ancestor*, the *producer*. Never must one of these names be rendered into the word *creator;* for, I repeat it, the idea of creating does not exist in the Sanskrit language. It is by means of emanation that he engenders the universe, as a father engenders a child; and by a law that perfectly resembles one which the Alexandrians called the law of *return*, he attracts to himself again everything, by destroying their changeable shape. This double law is symbolized in Brahmin literature by the figuration of the watch and the slumber of Brahmâ.

When drawn into closer relation with living beings, the absolute being takes the names of Vishnou and Çiva, which in modern times represent the divine person who vivifies living beings, and through whom all the forms of life return unto God; not the principle of preservation and destruction, as it was once believed. If we wanted to find in Indian doctrines a counterpart to the second person of the Christian Trinity, Vishnou would be chosen; but great disparities would be met with, for Vishnou is not the son of Brahmâ, but part of a pantheistic system. As for Çiva, there is nothing to correspond with him in Christianity, because the law of *return* is not actually to be found in it.

As soon however as the Brahmins had conceived the absolute unity of the being, in the presence of the multiplicity of living beings who inhabit the universe, and who are subjected to the immutable laws of generation, to the transmission and analogy of shape, they were naturally led to the theory of incarnation, which, after all, is that of the universal soul, or Vishnou. In the doctrine of creation, God keeps substantially aloof from created things, just as they are among themselves. Incarnation is however not the sequel of this doctrine; modern philosophy proves this by not mentioning it, the Judæo-Arabic doctrine by rejecting it, and the Christian doctrine by defining it as a miracle and a mystery. Yet in pantheism there is always a theory resembling that of the incarnation, whatever its form; in Brahminism, incarnation is a natural sequence of the

admitted principles. Vishnou then is the divine person, which becomes incarnate, not at one particular time and by a miracle, but always and everywhere. Every living being, however base, contains in himself Vishnou incarnate. His presence in men not only shows itself in the walk of life and in physical excellence, but also and especially in the soul's evidences, which are true thought and moral actions. When a man exercises a powerful influence over his contemporaries and succeeding generations by exalted intelligence and singleness of purpose, he is invested with incarnate divinity; such are the sons of Pândou in the Sanskrit epics. The religious idea in Brahminism strives unceasingly towards its fuller development, surrounded as it is by a series of incarnations or personifications of the absolute being. Since that being never appears in the universe, scarcely having access to the mind, he can only act by means of personal energies that emanate from him; these great divinities engendering in their turn uninterrupted series of sensible and living shapes, which we inappropriately call real beings. The producing of these generations can only take place after the creation of the two sexes, which is the universal condition of life; hence in perfected Brahminism, every god is wedded to his feminine energy—his source of production.

I cannot here enter more into this metaphysic; suffice it to say, that, from the day of its origin to this, it has swayed the whole flood of religious ideas in the Indian Orient. By following it up step by step, science is able in these days to account for the transformation of Indian worships, and for the polytheistic appearances which are its characteristics. If any man from the East were to come to Italy or even to France, unfamiliar with the Catholic dogmas, he would take our worships for idolatry, seeing the images which throng our churches and the outward form of ceremonies practised there. But on reading the books which explain or interpret the dogmas, he would detect the symbolism freed from, yet accounting for the outward worship, and beyond that symbolism, the funda-

mental doctrines of the soul's spirituality, of the Trinity and incarnation. It is just the same in India: the worship of Çiva, Mahâdêva, and Pârvatî, or of Krishna, or of course of Vishnou, or the fantastical figures to be met with in holy places, do not constitute idolatry; for all these different worships, arisen one after the other and co-existing without injury to each other, are but the outward expression of an inward and spiritualistic doctrine, whereof the pantheistic unity of God forms the essence. This is shown in nearly all the Sanskrit works, not only in the treatises on theology, but also in the poems, in which sacred philosophy often occupies an important place. We do not wish to aver that there is no sort of idolatry in the East; we should be contradicted by the ceremonies of the Jagarnâtha. Such aberrations are found everywhere. The images of saints, which have been taken down from their niches in order that they might cause the rain to fall or to cease, the madonnas who move their eyes, blood which flows, charms which act against thunderbolts, are they anything but the objects of an idol worship, fed by religious cupidity?

In Brahmin religions, side by side with the doctrines, there is a collection of rites, whose groundwork is always the same, whose accessory forms only vary according to the divinity to whom they are addressed. These secondary rites have appeared again with new divinities; hence the sect worshipping Krishna performs a ritual which widely deviates from Çivaism and from the severe worship of Vishnou. However, besides these secondary rites, there are certain fundamental rites in India, whose analogy with Christian rites has struck all scholars. The altar, the fire which burns on it, the holy bread, and the spirituous liquid of the *sôma*, which the priest consumes after having offered them to the divinity, the prayer he chants, and which is always a rogation craving physical and moral benefits, all these elements of worship are to be found in Brahminism, under those very forms and at all times of its existence. Even were we not in possession of the writings of the *Vêda*, it might be supposed that those essential

rites belong to an earlier time than the organization of the Brahmin community, and the final constitution of its religion. This is no longer a mere supposition; for the acquaintance with Vêdic hymns has, in these latter years, disclosed to us the origin of oriental pantheism, Indian divinities, figures, symbolic attributes, and, lastly, their permanent rites, by which they are honoured to this day.

Krishna is but a modern incarnation of Vishnou. Neither are Brahmâ nor Çiva Vêdic divinities. The word *brahman* is often used in the *Vêda;* but it designates prayer, rite, religion, which are carried on within the holy circle. The altar is the circle's figure, as it were; it is quadrangular, facing the four cardinal points, and from these subsequently sprang Brahmâ's four faces. The conception of that god gave way imperceptibly to that of Agni, which is the physical fire (Latin, *ignis*), the vital heat and principle of thought, all in one, and always pertaining to life. Agni is the great divinity of the Vêdic hymns. In them pantheism exists only in germ and in a state of tendency; but it exists already entire and, as it were, formed in the commentaries of the *Vêda*, which were composed between the period of the hymns and the Brahmin times. At that period therefore, Âryan thought in India took a definite turn. Hitherto the groundwork of its doctrines had been naturalism; the great phenomena of nature alone occupied the minds of the priests, who were also poets, fathers of families, labourers, and warriors. Beyond these phenomena they also conceived their source, and with a perfectly clear understanding and estimation of that power, they invested it with life and intelligence. In that species of mythological pantheon, Agni occupied the pre-eminent place. The priest, turning towards the east, kindled it on the altar at sunrise; the spark produced by friction ignited dry and light wood; the alcoholic liquid of the *sôma* and the clarified butter poured over it inflamed it. Then the priest called upon the gods to partake of the sacred feast, which was composed of milk and cakes, sometimes of flowers and fruits, sometimes even of an immolated animal. The gods

drew near invisibly, but not one of the congregation doubted their real presence by the sacred hearth, the fire, and the offering. The gods are principally those of sky and atmosphere. Vishnou, who dwells in high regions, has the sun for his chariot; Rudra, who disturbs the air, has for his empire the noisy troop of the *maruts*, who are the winds; Indra, monarch of the upper regions, wrestling with the cloud, strikes it with lightning, and causes the rain to flow upon the fruitful earth. When the Brahmins realized what was the part attributed to Vishnou, who in the *Vêda*, as it were, merely symbolizes the sun and its producing qualities, they at once invested him with all the phenomena of physical and moral life. It is an incontestable fact, even to-day, that the development of physical life here below proceeds from the sun, of which it is but a metamorphosis. On the other hand, when the Brahmins found thought nowhere in the world separated from life, they concluded that the principle of the one is identical with the other. Thus did the penetrating energy of Vishnou become the very principle of the generation of living things, and eventually of incarnations. It is well known now, that the god Çiva, who became one of the persons of the Indian trinity, and whose worship is of so much importance in modern India, was first of all Rudra, king of the winds.

Rudra became by an imperceptible transformation a dreaded being, looked upon as the destroyer of life. As for Brahmâ, though his history cannot be given in a few words, it will be readily believed that the prayer (*brahman*) may be considered as the expression of the divinest thought, and that thought being personified, it creates a great symbolic divinity. Thus were the elements prepared whose alliance by-and-by formed the Indian trinity. Brahmâ represented the mind, and with it knowledge and religion; Vishnou, life in its Divine unity and incarnations; Çiva, the law of return, by virtuè of which all thinking and living beings, as well as inorganic forms, disappear and return to their origin.

As for Agni, all that was metaphysical in him losing its

meaning, he merely represented the sacred fire, a symbolic portion of the worship, the mouthpiece of the gods, the messenger who transmitted to their regions in odorous vapours the offerings of their worshippers. In order to constitute pantheism, as it has existed in the East for nearly three thousand years, we need only conceive those divinities as the shapes of one and the same absolute being, and trace that diversity of shapes to a unity from which all shape is excluded. That unity received the neuter name of Brahm.

Let us attempt another and more searching flight into the Vêdic past. There we shall no longer find any trace of pantheism, neither the idea of creation. The oldest hymns, and all they teach us of the times preceding them, allow of no doubt on the head of those primitive religions; it was polytheism, and nothing else.

That fact is of great moment in science, for it makes a firm stand against the belief entertained by many Christians; namely, that all religions spring from biblical traditions. That belief is wrong, and ought to be quite given up. In the *Vêda* there is nothing emanating from the same sources as Semitism. The older the hymns, the less indication there is of an only God separate from the world. The Âryan mind first conceived it in multiple forms, which forms were then but physical powers amplified and deified, the subsequent vehicles of metaphysical conceptions, altered in shape and sometimes in name. Only after many centuries did the Âryan mind rise to the conception of an absolute unity. Having taken for their point of departure realities, which touch the senses and appeal to conscience, they never lost sight of the solid bases of their religious edifice. Thought, life, the infinite succession of forms, which rise out of each other unceasingly, like the waves of the sea—this was their chief consideration, this was the road which most surely guided them to that pantheism of which the western people have so incomplete a knowledge, and very often a wrong one. The idea of an individual God, separate from the world, is found in no part of the Âryan doctrines, beginning or middle, still less in their Vêdic

origins. At this point a science of recent creation, *comparative philology*, begins to perform a part which no other science can undertake. It is not my intention to give an account or even a summary of it. Let me only say that its analytical and comparative method, when applied to analogous words of congenital languages, makes that science a means of investigation replete with invaluable weight and exactness. Science has, in fact, recognised the reciprocal independence of the Âryan tongues; we know that Latin is not derived from Greek, any more than German, Slav, or Lithuanian, and that those idioms only began to borrow terms from each other at a comparatively recent date. We know too that the Medo-Persian tongue, known by the name of Zend, is neither the daughter nor the mother of Sanskrit; the same with European languages. Philology having placed these truths beyond the range of doubt, has, by the same stroke, proved numberless analogies between all those idioms, and disclosed their parentage and their common origin. Hence sprang that comparative study of languages which is called comparative philology. The mother of those tongues which the method reveals is no longer spoken anywhere; but philology once more revives its fundamental and essential forms. It works upon the principle that the old terms, common to all the tongues of one family, were once part of the primordial idiom; the same reasoning applies to any term recurring in two languages, after it has been ascertained that the term was not grafted from one tongue on to the other. Without a doubt, these terms existed before the oldest of the two branches fell from the Âryan trunk; and those terms which are common to all existed before any of them became alienated. Now some of these terms express family relationships, some, social and political stations, some material facts, some again, religious conceptions. Hence these last must have preceded the oldest sacred record of the Âryan race, which is the *Vêda*.

In the same way another new study has come into existence, *comparative mythology*, which discloses to us the religious past of humanity, or certainly of European peoples, as geology

does the terrestrial past. From the day that scholars first perused the writings of the *Vêda*, they were struck with the analogy between the newly discovered divinities and those of Greece and ancient Italy. Then, as comparison widened its sphere, it was found that not alone the Indian pantheons, but also those of the Germans, Scandinavians, and other northern peoples must all be comprised in one and the same ancient religious system, not omitting the original portions of Persian and Median myths. Mythologies ceased thenceforth to be looked upon as arbitrary conceptions; seen in their true light, they were acknowledged to be the natural and spontaneous fruit of the Âryan spirit, in whose religious development they commemorate the primitive or polytheistic period. The study of mythologists therefore quite ranks with the general science of religions, forming in itself one of its chapters. Comparative philology, as applied to mythology, does not enlighten one on the nature of gods, neither can it be expected to give any serious philosophical interpretation of polytheism. Nevertheless the names of gods express the idea which was entertained of each one when it was first conceived; so that a science which traces a word to its very cradle, and ascertains its primordial meaning, may be said to throw light upon the study of myths and facilitate their interpretation. It has been noticed for some years, that in each mythology there are two parts to consider, one common to the entire race, which the people took with them on leaving their native soil, and another owned by each of these peoples, answering to a local evolution of polytheism. The results obtained by the German scientists of symbolism have lost much of their bearing since the application of the fundamental distinction; as in the classing, for instance, of the Greek divinities into the gods of the Hellênes and the gods of the Pelasgians. It would be unwise however, on the part of philologers, to despise such works as Kreutzer's and Guigniaut's; those books have thrown a very strong light into the history of mythology, and heightened its importance even before the disclosures of the *Vêda* helped to determine their origins.

Indeed, the grand science of symbolism is still at work. It would be impossible to imagine that these poetic conceptions and figured expressions were but empty words, and not the visible semblances of divine persons, ideal symbols, and phenomenal powers. The potency of those phenomena is visible: the winds, the thunder, the rain, the sun's effectual heat, are neither abstractions nor mere words; they are the evidences of an incontestable and realistic power, invisible, impalpable, defying the physicist, who can only weigh and measure the effect. That power is a metaphysical being; but when the religious sentiment is awakened, it is a god. It must be borne in mind, that the power infinitely surpasses, and to an eminent degree contains, the phenomena.

Now it will be understood, how a work of synthesis applied to phenomena reduces the number of divine embodiments, just as an operation of analysis increases it. The mere classifying of observed facts, echoes, as it were, of the divine powers to whom they were attributed, was sufficient to put in order the divine hierarchy, and institute a pantheon. The populace, so proximate to phenomena, and so far from metaphysics, easily becomes polytheistic; it takes a delight in increasing its gods. Scholars, from the opposite reason, have advanced more and more towards a unity.

This unity has never been reached by western mythologies; in Greece, in Rome, as well as with the barbarians of the West and North, polytheism continued until the appearance of Christianity. But in the East the Persians attained to a unity, which was however soon marred by the antagonism of Ormuzd and Ahriman. The Indians alone gave it the full light of their understanding, and from the moment it first appeared in their theology it never faded out of it. Still the pantheistic unity of the being is not incompatible with a trinity of great gods, nor with the multiplicity of secondary gods, or *angels*, to use an expression of Monsignor Pallegoix, late Catholic Bishop of Siam. For these gods are but the various countenances of one and the same being, the symbolic expressions of his powers in nature.

I have now just traced the principal lines of the science as applied to the great religions of humanity. Though it be so far but a sketch, though the efforts of scholars are at present directed upon all the points of its career, it is already easy to see one's way clear on this chequered board of human wanderings. The two ideas which engendered the religious systems and worships are like two flags set up in the midst of nations. Raised up by the two youngest of the human races, they guided them for a time, separately one from the other. Every contact between them was the signal of war. Buddha was the first to preach universal charity to humanity, and to make peace. But his exclusively Âryan doctrine converted, outside its native soil, only barbarous people, or those who were destitute of any religion; the West closed itself against him.

The metaphysic and worship of Christianity subsequently merged the Âryan and the Semitic thoughts. Christianity conquered all the western Âryans; but it was not welcomed by the Semites, notwithstanding its doctrine of a personal God, neither by the Âryans of Asia, because of this very doctrine; it converted only a very few Jews and Musulmans, and not one Indian.

The two primitive sources then go on pouring their streams into two separate beds. The common one, into which they have vainly tried to rush, is not yet deep enough to contain them both; hence this third current of religious ideas, impelled by the western peoples. Is it the lot of the *Vêda*, the Bible, of the Buddhist Church or the Christian to gather together all these nations some day? Science seems silent on this head; its interest lies in the past rather than in the future. At all events, we may presume that the truest of fundamental theories will conquer; unless there be a law by which they must all vanish, to make way only for an absolute freedom of individual thought, at a period of perfect human enlightenment.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HISTORIC UNITY OF RELIGIONS.

All studies of religious subjects tend now-a-days towards the solving of a particular problem, of which no very perfect or precise idea has yet been formed, but which nevertheless seems to be the end and aim of all investigations. The works of pure archæology, such as those of Kuhn, Preller, De Rossi, furnish materials for the building up of the science, quite as much as the more theoretic writings of De Bunsen, Ewald, Nicolas, or De Pressensé. The moving spirit of most of these works, and of others of the same style, connects them with different schools, opinions, or sometimes even with different sects: yet besides the more or less exclusive or limited doctrines of many authors, there gathers in the public mind a grouping of ideas, exempt from all passion or prejudice, ideas which sum up the scholar's discoveries, take from his books anything likely to prevail, and gradually constitute that unity which is called science. I would draw the reader's attention to this grouping of ideas, reminding him that it arises out of an already large quantity of erudite works, whose number is daily on the increase. These works treat of many different subjects in nature; some discourse on history, others on philology, others again on archæology, on science, and even on art. In fact, the religious element leaves its stamp upon nearly all the fruits of a people's civilization, the impression varying in depth according to periods and crises. We, in our time, have but to gaze down the vista of ruins with which the sojourn and history of mankind are strewn,—ruins of books, ruins of monuments, of traditions and languages, of sacred rites and institutions—which we

invest with fresh thought, like an anatomist, who with a few bones makes a whole animal, or a clever architect, who restores in his drawing the calculated proportions of a ruined temple. The infinite variety of fragments that has been gleaned from religions has given rise in Europe to a number of works, of which we can form but an imperfect estimate. Each one separately seems to grope only in a chaos of detail; but collectively they elucidate and complete one another, and help to form that centre out of which the fundamental notion of the science and with it the solution of the problem may eventually rise up. We will now try to propound that first notion, the result, not of more or less ingenious hypotheses belonging to the past century, but of positive facts which contemporary investigations have established. We believe that this idea once brought to the light, this idea, which has up to the present day animated all great religions, may in its turn be able to serve as a point of departure for new investigations and as a guide to those who wish to prove them.

The searchings into any one religion show us its isolation from all others, affirming its autochthony, or at least its originality. That affirmation is nearly always a positive one. Sometimes however a religion does acknowledge the kinship of a forerunner; but only under certain and frequently onerous conditions. These conditions are, that the preceding religions be regarded as merely preparing and smoothing the way to a new and permanent one. Thus the Christian religion does not consider itself the issue of Judaism, but it looks upon the old law as a figure and a stepping stone for the new one. Again, the Koran acknowledges Jesus as a prophet inspired from heaven; yet in its estimation the doctrine of the gospel is but an imperfect sketch of the one of which the prophet was to be the promulgator. Once promulgated, Islam no longer requires Christianity, which, in fact, becomes burdensome; likewise when the Christian doctrine was proclaimed, Judaism proved only a hostile power which had to be shaken off. All the relationship these great religions seem willing to claim

amounts to radical alienation and the assumption, in appearance at least, of individual originality.

If we inquire into the remoter past or into the East, the pretensions to independence on the part of the ancient religions is still more decided. One cannot credit the popular belief of ancient Greece, that her gods came to her from Egypt; it is a supposition of Herodotus, and nothing more. That personal opinion of the historian has no more weight than that of the linguists of former days, who insisted that all languages came from the Hebrew, because, forsooth, when creating the things of paradise for Adam, God had given them Hebrew names; we know now how tongues formed themselves, and that the Jewish is one of the latest. We also know that their Adam and his paradise are myths which reached them from without, originating with people who did not speak Hebrew. Herodotus' opinion has been refuted in the same manner; from the many and repeated searches into archæology we learn that the Greek worships were local and independent of each other; that they were not the perpetuation of a foreign and distant origin, but that in every part of the country legends were told which established the autochthony of the religion practised there. The earliest discovered points of reference were Crete and Thrace, which were in fact two shining centres of diffusion of the worships of the Pelasgians and the Hellênes; but nothing proved that those worships had come from Upper Asia to settle in Thrace or in the island of the Cretans. On the contrary, it was related that Jupiter was bred in the island of Crete, and Orpheus, whom modern science has recognised as a personage of the *Vêda*,[1] was supposed to have been born in a European country, and to have departed thence with the Argonauts in quest of the golden fleece. Each Greek divinity was regarded as the founder of his or her own worship: Juno at Argos, Apollo at Delphi and Delos, Neptune and Pallas at Athens, and so on.

[1] The Vêdic personage of whom we speak is Ribhu (Arbhu), whose name and legend have the greatest possible analogy with those of Orpheus.

The Persians attributed religion to God as its author. This "principle of life and knowledge," which they called Ahura-mazda, a word of which the Greeks made *Ὀρομάζδης*, and the modern Persians Ormuzd, had himself dictated to his faithful servant Zoroaster the sacred formulas on which the religion and civilization of the world should rest. Later, when the Persians were brought into contact with the Indians, on the one hand, and with the Greeks, on the other, they only regarded the religions of either as foreign and hostile worships. In their eyes the Greeks were barbarians and odious idolaters; in the eyes of Cambyses ancient Egypt was equally despised; as for the Indians, we know from the *Avesta* that their chosen gods were the very same which the Persians called demons, whereas they again plunged into hell those *ahuras*[1] which to the Persians were the supreme conception of divinity. Then the Persians carried fierce war against the ungodly, upsetting their idols and burning their temples wherever the politics of Darius and the passions of Xerxes led them.

Now the Brahmins' most ancient record was the *Vêda;* truth had come to them from Manu, to whom God had Himself revealed it. They considered themselves quite free from every foreign influence; they did not detect any bond of fraternity between their religion and those of western nations. They knew, in fact, that it had gradually ripened on Indian soil before any blight could have reached its first shoots; their books and traditions gave evidence of its gradual and complete severance from the *Vêda*, by means of their forefathers' assiduous labour in the solitude of the forest and in the priestly colleges. No doubt on this point ever entered their minds, nor can it in ours; and yet, how did this source of tradition find its way into the *Vêda?* Who

[1] In Persia the name of *ahura* was not only given to Ormuzd, but also to all the other *amschaspands*, or pure spirits, and even to powers of an inferior order. The word comes from *ahu*, life, and from the ending of the adjective, *ra;* it means, *who has* or *who gives life*, the principle of giving life to oneself or to others. It is the Vêdic word *asura;* the *asuras* subsequently became the horned devils of the Indians.

had infused that ancient doctrine from which the Brahmins quaffed as "from a well with a thousand sources"?[1] The same reply ever: Its author was Brahmâ; the men who chanted its hymns before the altar were merely the mouths by means of which he made the *Vêda* known to the Âryans; in short, Brahmâ was the "poet, the object of the theology, the theology itself and the theologian."[2]

Nowhere has the divine revelation and absolute originality of a religion been stated in clearer terms than it was by the Brahmins. In this respect the Christian doctrine is less arbitrary: its one and only source is the preaching of Jesus; it teaches Christians that Christ was the Son of God and God Himself, but at the same time admits His human extraction, and His traditional descent, both on His father's and mother's sides, from the house of David. Therefore we do not trace to His parentage His title of Christ, which had already been bestowed on Cyrus, but purely to His Divine and direct emanation, to His exemption from the primary laws of human generation. It is the divinity of the Master which breaks every bond between His doctrine and that of the Jews or of other nations; it precludes all possibility of a man considering himself a Christian without believing in the divinity of Christ, or of a man believing in the divinity and being of another religion. The obstacles then which stand between Christianity and other worship are quite insuperable.

Now, having settled this point, and shown that every religion, ancient and modern, arrogates to itself an almost absolute originality, the opposite question arises of its own accord. One of the first and simplest rules of criticism, and, in fact, of all sciences of observation, is the fresh and inverted disposal of all facts and the assumption of contrary conditions. Therefore, notwithstanding that every religion openly lays claim to originality, the unprejudiced scholar, travelling along the road of scientific research, and cherishing the one and only thought of dis-

[1] See our translation of the *Bhagavad-gîtâ*.
[2] *Ibid.*

covering nature's laws, cannot prevent his doubts arising as to whether there exists any filiation between those same religions. Our present century has however, once and for all, set these doubts at rest by means of the many and varied treatises and works which have appeared on this head. The numerous and proven facts which have come to light so perfectly tally with each other, that all errors in that direction are scientifically impossible.

Religions have proceeded one out of the other. Not only are the forms of worship in each one not original, not only are the symbols found to have crept successively into each worship, retaining and transmitting to succeeding centuries all the outward signs, which at no time underwent more than the most superficial alterations, but the mystic, or rather the metaphysical doctrine also, which is hidden under these veils, and which we might term the Divine element in religions, has remained unchanged since the remotest days until ours, vivifying these symbolic figures, rites, and formulas, which constitute its outward and visible signs.

At present we know for certain that most, if not all, the various worships of ancient Greece originated in Asia. How did they light upon the continent of Europe? Which roads did they follow? This is an important but secondary question, one not solved yet, though we are aware that Crete, the archipelago, and the countries north of Greece were as many roads which brought the Hellênes their gods. Be that as it may, every modern scholar admits that the distinction which, up till quite recently, archæology made between the Pelasgian gods and the Hellênic is illusory, and cannot be put under the head of two distinctly separate historic periods. Each succeeding year finds one of these gods drawn back to his origin by bonds which cannot be disclaimed. That origin is not Egyptian, it is Asiatic; and in Asia it is not to be found with the Semites, nor even with the Indo-Persians, but in a more ancient centre, which was first occupied by the Âryan race and ultimately produced alike Persians, Indians, and Greeks.

From this centre there sprang, at two different but not distant periods, perhaps even contemporaneously, the religions of Persia and India. The common origin of these two great religious systems of Asia was brought to light by the exertions of our modern orientalists and critics. There is not only the most striking analogy between the oldest doctrines and symbols of the *Avesta* and the *Vêda*, but in the first-mentioned of these sacred works there lingers the memory of the northern origins of Persian Mazdeism. Moreover in it is to be found a collection of writings belonging to different epochs; and the study of the oldest fragment discloses an almost complete analogy between the religious doctrines contained in it and those contained in the *Vêda*. Still there is no reason for believing that the doctrine attributed to Zoroaster originated in the latter book; we must therefore assume that they both issued from a common source. The *Avesta* gives the name of this source and its geographical position.[1] The hymns of the *Vêda* do not mention it, or make doubtful allusions to it; but the commentaries of the *Vêda*, which themselves belong to a remote period, and are written in the Vêdic tongue, are more explicit: they marshal before our eyes the Âryan populations of India, coming from the north-east with their creeds and their gods. Those same gods are to be found again in Zoroaster's book, and the metaphysical conception which animated those figures is also the same. The common origin of Parsism and Brahminism grows manifestly clear, the deeper science penetrates into recent discoveries. After having arrived at our present stage of judgment, all doubt on this head vanishes for ever.

The reader must also bear in mind this fact: that the more we learn about the old Germanic and Scandinavian religions and the popular traditions which still hover in the European atmosphere, the plainer we see their bond of unity with Asia. The successive religions of the West never accomplished a total extinction of the old traditions

[1] In the countries of Çugda and Bâgdhi, which are Sogdiana and Bactriana.

in the Âryan memory; they exist in countless numbers in Germany, and those afloat in France are only waiting to be gathered into a collection. Every mountain gorge of Europe teems with recollections; every upheaval tells of buried tongues; both may yet be linked into an intelligible chain. Greece also, notwithstanding the extent of her pagan period, and the subsequent vehemence of her Christian creed, still cherishes in popular rhymes the legends which are unmistakably pre-Hellenic, and which from all appearance relate to the first Âryan migrations from Asia.[1] The mountains which traverse Europe from east to west attest the most curious and significant of these legends.[2] It would be useful to compile them, just as archæologists fit together broken carvings and inscriptions. With such landmarks and towers of observation, we could easily trace a map of the earliest Âryan migrations, and follow the progress of our religious ideas after their emergence from the cradle. At any rate, we are now certain that this diffusion took place at some remote time, and that all those ancient worships pertained, like those of Greece, Italy, Persia, and India, to one same system, or rather to one primordial unity.

Judaic doctrines, on which up to our time no attention had been bestowed, seemed to tend towards quite another channel of ideas and facts. Orientalists found India and Persia overflowing with subjects enough to absorb all their mental and physical vigour, and a like task was reserved for those given to the study of Semitic books and traditions.

[1] Such for example is the legend of Charos, whose name (no doubt rightly pronounced Karos), so often appears in popular Greek lore. This Charos is the god of death; he has been and is still being confounded with Charon, with whom he has scarcely anything in common, whereas almost all his attributes recall the Kâla of the Indians. If the identity of Charos and Kâla be indisputable, then Greek lore does indeed belong to the greatest antiquity.

[2] The discovery of Orphic songs in the Rhodope, made known by M. Verkovitch, is being confirmed. It will no doubt be of great value; for those songs do not merely prove the existence of Orphic legends in the spots where the Greeks located his history, but they give a specimen of an Âryan tongue anterior perhaps to the Greek, at least partly so, and still preserved in the mountains of Thrace.

Moreover the system of Semitic languages is so different from that of the Âryan tongues, that only with the greatest difficulty could one person master them. The once existing obstacles to that study have nearly all been removed; the most important works of both these series have been translated and commentated. Now-a-days we have grammars and dictionaries of almost every language at our disposal. The knowledge of the one helps in the study of another. So that, having once mastered four or five Âryan languages, one can acquire as many more in a very short time. These books, which are the anatomical tools and instruments of erudition, perform their functions with as much facility, promptitude, and precision as the engines and machinery in our factories. Our modern investigations into Hebrew literature have been as successful as those directed on Âryan traditions, and their main result has been the refutation of Judaic originality. Not only is the entire first period of Jewish traditions looked upon as a collection of transparent myths, but the second period, which extends from Moses to David, has not one strictly historic feature: it is a mixture of alternate actual facts and ideally heroic legends. Hebrew books disclose to us two periods, the like of which are to be found at the outset of every ancient nation: the one simply mythological, the other heroic. As for the religious doctrine contained in books which preceded the captivity of Babylon, it reduces itself to little else than the evident traces of a foreign importation. The influence of this importation was very powerful during the captivity, as before shown; but though it returned with the Jews into their own land, it never gained a full possession of their hearts: an insignificant number of intellectually superior members of the Israelite race kept its faint spark alive until the advent of Jesus, and under the stirring conditions related in the Bible. Now in all fairness, can we doubt its original emanation from central Asia, from Mazdeism, and indirectly from the Âryans, and its temporal transmission into the foreign race, the Israelites?

And, finally, we come to the Christian religion, an appa-

rently recent religion, which seems to have begun only eighteen centuries ago. It is of all religions the one whose true origins are the easiest to trace and to recognise. Although the first centuries of its existence have bequeathed to us but few books, and though this very existence was for many years a socially mysterious one, painfully sustained amid many hardships, we have still three such documental sources as no religion of antiquity ever possessed: and these are the rituals; the written or discussed dogmas; and the figured monuments, of which the catacombs of Rome provide an almost inexhaustible wealth of evidence. Up till now science has only attempted to establish the origin of the Christian dogmas. As for the rites, we are not aware that they have ever been the subject of scientific research. Finally, as far as we know, Christian archæology does not begin before the early days of Christianity; hence there yet remains to be discovered the origin of almost all its figurative symbols.

It is well to remember however the fact that rites and symbols are but the outward expression of doctrine, that they travel with it over the face of the earth, and share its fate. Doctrine, of course, is their forerunner; for without it they would be meaningless, they would carry neither weight nor authority, and seem but mere chimæras. On the other hand, in the course of time, the transmission of rites and symbols still goes on, even after the doctrine itself is forgotten; and they continue in full force in virtue of the mystic power exercised by the primitive doctrine. So the mainspring of origin is to be looked for principally in dogmas. When the origin of the dogmas is revealed, we may confidently expect the discovery of rites and symbols. We have already proved that the Christian dogmas were in existence long before the advent of Jesus, incompletely and secretly among the Jews, openly and ostensibly among the Persians. We can trace each successive attempt, from the time of Darius until Xerxes, to imbue the Hellênes with Âryan dogmas, these attempts taking place by turns in Greece in no less a city than Athens, then in Egypt at the

time of the Ptolemies, and only meeting with success after the overthrow of one edifice of thought and the setting up of Persian beliefs in its stead. That was the very time of the Master's advent in Judæa, when He founded the religion of Christ.

The reader must have noticed in the foregoing pages that we leave out all polemics bearing on the question, and confine ourselves to the general and most reliable results of erudition.

So far from any attempts on the part of science to detract from the Christian religion, or indeed from any other, her first aim is to discover their respectively inherent qualifications, and to firmly establish them. As institutions, they are what they are; their influence on humanity is what it is. Science alone may succeed in discovering their laws, and understand their drift. Whatever their respective aspects, they must all submit themselves to one general problem. On the one hand, religions, or, more properly speaking, men who profess them, assert the more or less absolute originality of their doctrine; on the other hand, science, which comprises among others men of highly religious attainments, finds that doctrines spring out of each other, or, better still, that they all form but one and the same doctrine under renewed aspects and varied conditions. Unless we desire to shut out the light of day, and forcibly blind our vision, we must grant that a straightforward science will lead to the truth more safely than the total absence of all investigation; further, that conclusions founded upon a good method and recognised facts must surely carry more weight than mere statements. Thus we see the religious problem resolving itself into two alternatives: religions are either the immediate, voluntary, and deliberate outcome of a hidden power, the magic apparitions on the pages of history, or else the spontaneous produce of nature's ordinary influence, the gradual but visible growth of successive phases. By admitting the first of these two alternatives, we reject—and with reason—the thought that one religion is more than another the work of an evil genius.

Intolerance of religions is reprehensible in every way, for are not all men alike the children of God? Is it not contrary to the most simple and consonant feelings of a father to wish his children evil? We can only think, with certain enlightened Brâhmins of India, that each religion is made for him who follows it, that each is the work of a beneficent Being, and that together they are the wheels of Divine miracles, turning and ever turning in humanity's deep, continuous current. In the second alternative, these sudden operations of an imperceptible power are disclaimed—the operations of setting up, altering, and restoring. God is not the efficient but the formal cause of religions; He is not the workman, He is the model; man is the workman. He builds temples, sets up altars, institutes ceremonies, offers up sacrifices, prays aloud in the congregation, interprets religious thoughts, prophesies, and expounds.

But man the priest is no more the author of the dogma which he expounds than the man of science is the author of the natural law which he discovers. The dogma will for a time continue its diffusion, develop its elements, and having finally exhausted them, will merge its attributes in a new channel of thought, and contribute towards a new dogma. The transitions are imperceptible; even after concentrating all relevant matter, it is impossible to fix the time when any dogma commenced. Thus, for instance, the annunciation of Christ's coming was not revealed on a sudden by John the Baptist; or if it was among the Jews whom he baptized, it was not so with the Greeks. The Christian doctrines of Asia had long since been anticipated by the Alexandrians and entire sects of Egypt: by Stoics, by Plato, Socrates, and his contemporaries, called Orphics, Pythagoreans, or Baptizers, who all believed in, taught, and practised the maxims of the subsequent theory.

Now by means of our scientific hypothesis, we find that the course of religions might be represented by geometrical curves. Similarly as a human being, which springs from an invisible germ, grows both before its birth and after, and having attained its utmost vigour, decreases in vitality

and once more returns to its mere elements; and as the wave which from a gentle ripple swells into the volume which overwhelms and swallows up a great ship, then gradually subsides and mingles with the next wave,—may we regard a new religion, which, after its first conception, begins its feeble existence in the obscure cradle of a secret society, then emerges and subjugates the hearts and minds of men, until it is in time itself subjected, and the inverted source of its successor. The geometrical curves which are to represent the course of religions do not consist of a plain curve, but rather of a series of lines, which science however connects at the roots and traces to a common soil—the soil which yields the never-failing element of religion, and of which we will speak presently. Let us only remember and hold fast that the problem of origin applies to all origins, to the latest as to the earliest of all.

Nothing leads us reasonably to suppose that any one religion ever alighted on this earth by the unlooked for and sudden stroke of the Divine sceptre; for the scientific investigations of the present day have but too plainly opened before our eyes the convergent roads leading to Asia as the centre of all, or certainly of the greatest religions. The pages of the oldest written record are spread before us; it dates as nearly as possible to that centre, and may be considered to express the precursory thoughts of the very earliest form of worship. The record is the *Vêda*. Its hymns are the most convincing exponents of the fundamental doctrine that has reached us in unbroken transmission. They openly declare that worship, symbols, rites, and even gods, are the creations of man; they set forth in what way these things were conceived and for what end; likewise their connexion with physical and moral phenomena. Who can aver, in the face of these statements, that their authors' purpose was to deceive and mislead? —a purpose on which their own power must eventually have been miserably wrecked.

Moreover these statements were written, not by a priestly

corporation or caste, but by fathers who served at the domestic altar in presence of their wife, children, and servants, for whose instruction they composed those holy psalms, and in particular for their sons, the future transmitters of the tradition Divine.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRINCIPLES OF UNITY IN RELIGION.

One law then presides over the birth, the growth, and the destruction of all religions, and this law may be expressed by a geometrical form. We have shown by what method science has been led to these results. Let us now simply remember that it is the method of observation, identical with that which applies in all sciences whose objects are real. Only, among religious facts, some come from the past, others are still present and may serve as experience. The facts of the past belong to history; they constitute the domain of decayed religions and the crumbling portions of existing ones. Since they emanate logically one out of the other, and are, as it were, only the same parts, varying continually according to circumstances, this renewal of centres places them in exactly the same condition as that of a physical phenomenon in the hands of an experimentalist, giving to the historical analysis the solidity of an experimental method. Present facts are of course easier still to analyse and compare with each other; the insight one may acquire into them serving as a point of departure for the past. Now knowing as we do, that to-day's religious facts are the inevitable consequences of yesterday's, forming again with their predecessors an uninterrupted chain-work, we are convinced that the mystery which surrounds the rituals, the symbolism, and even the present dogmas, cannot be dispelled until we have by retrospection reached the early forms and their very origin itself. In this we have been and hope to be greatly helped by our recent success with eastern studies, which take us by the hand and penetrate with us to the fountain head.

A deeper knowledge of languages has rendered the most signal assistance in the application of the historic method; because many names and religious terms have now lost all etymological meaning. Both Latin and Greek are necessary for the understanding of most terms in the Roman Catholic worship. Among those terms again very few are derived from the Hebrew, and some are neither Latin nor Greek. Whence can they be then? Even the ancients made use of foreign terms, as, for instance, very few Greek divinities have Greek names, or Latin divinities Latin names. Their etymological source must be searched out therefore, not as a mere satisfaction to our curiosity, but in compliance with the requirements of science. The words in question express things and ideas: now if these things and ideas were spontaneous productions, no foreign terms need have been applied to them, the less so as those ancient tongues had a marvellous facility for creating new words. This would suggest the possibility that those things and ideas were not sudden creations with foreign names, but foreign creations with native names.

When one considers that these words of foreign derivation constitute almost the entire sacred tongue, one may realize what a diffusion of light a prudently applied science of languages would throw into the origin of religions. Now every road along which the force of this method has travelled terminates, as do historic investigations, in central Asia and in the *Vêda*. The early beginnings of rites, symbols, and doctrines must then be principally sought for in that country and in that book. Supposing however those sacred terms were in those sources as elsewhere found to differ from the common tongue, it would prove that the march of science had reached but the first sources of knowledge, and that further investigations would have to be persevered in. No such disappointment however awaits us: for in the *Vêda* every word explains its own meaning, so does every symbol; its pages are so many invitations for us to witness the birth of rites and doctrines. Considering it as the centre of all investigations pertaining to the his-

tory of religions, we may with full confidence look to the hymns of the *Vêda* as the nucleus of light.

But the sciences of languages and of history applied to religious matter, that is to say, sacred archæology, are anatomical, analytical, or at best only methods of comparison. Philological analysis, for instance, is more taken up with forms than with the meaning of words. We do certainly find the meaning of words changing with their forms, and periodically without changing their form. The word *charming*, for instance, has changed its meaning since the days of Louis XIII., and again since Louis XIV.; and the same may be said of a great number of words.

These changes enter into the province of literature as principally affecting ideas; whereas the science of languages finds out whence came the word *charming*, which is a derived form of *to charm*, and coming from *charm*. Now *charm* proceeds literally from the Latin *carmen*, according to perfectly defined laws to which the Latin tongue surrendered when it turned into French. The same method of comparative analysis will apply to the Latin *carmen*, and perform its functions, until it discovers the first elements and primordial monosyllables, whose conjunction and successive transformations engendered the word *carmen*. Here we have a purely morphological science, in perfect resemblance to the comparative anatomy of animals and to vegetable morphology. Archæology and religious history proper come under the same head; they exhibit the successive phases through which rites, symbols, and even doctrines had to pass, and finally they illumine the past and show us their inherent forms and formulas.

Now religions are living organisms. If it were not so we should have to admit, unrestrictedly, the celebrated saying, *nomina numina*, and look upon religious conceptions as so many empty words. It would then be inconceivable how entire nations, and repeatedly several nations successively, could have taken such inanities unto themselves for their religious worship, founded their grandest institutions upon mere illusions, and bent the knee to mere words and

phrases. Religion is an act of adoration, and adoration is at once an intellectual act, by which man acknowledges a superior power, and an act of love, by which he craves protection. These acts are no abstractions; they refuse to be explained away by scientific abstractions. They are realities which man has always enacted, as much during his periods of eminent civilization as during the days of his barbarism and decay. Either the most egregious infatuation must be laid to the charge of the human stock, or we must acknowledge the permanent and living element of reality which preserves the efficiency of religions for all times. This element must exercise the same influence in their long and complex history as in the life of organized bodies.

Anatomy and morphology, which work out the analysis of the outward and internal features of these latter, explain nothing unless they incessantly keep in view that idea of life which animates and quickens them; but directly they consent to the entrance of a living principle as a means of explanation, they cease to be purely descriptive and turn into physiology.[1] Thus if the mysterious notion which dwells in the sacred formulas be disregarded, archæology and the science of languages will fail both to account for the birth and growth of religions, and for their common analogy. That common analogy which has prevailed throughout escapes their notice; mythologies henceforth prove mere amusements and poetical inventions; and the mighty empire that religions had over men, the mysterious agent which crowded the cities with altars, the tasks laid upon and accomplished by lines of generations, the spell which often kindled and armed one nation against its neighbour, which shook the foundations of state and dynasty, and which in our own days even holds both the eastern and western world in breathless suspense, that empire and agency, I say, are void, and science itself is built of sand. The explanation given by Epicurus, so boldly reproduced

[1] See in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of December 15th, 1867, the work of M. Claude Bernard on the "Problème de la Physiologie générale."

by Lucretius, and possibly serving as the only goal to science, is in fact no explanation at all. However great the "phantom which revealed on high his horrid head" may be imagined, that phantom will himself be the production of the human brain and will need an interpretation.

Now we have found that there is a fundamental idea in religions which must be ever present to the mind when it encounters the facts proved by the science of languages and by archæology; for that same idea will give the interpretation to facts. This science will thenceforth cease to be a pure analysis, and take its place among physiological sciences. The idea which, as I said before, answers to the idea of life in animal and vegetable physiology, will be no longer a mystery. It may then be read, and uttered in a hundred simple terms without symbolic formulas; and when once grasped it will be continually recurring in ancient religions: vivifying the ceremonies of worship, concealing itself in symbols, giving to dogmatic expressions their meaning, context, and range, and finally expanding into moral doctrines, and into all kinds of practices and influences whose features will be the true reflectors of the community's complexion and condition. And this is the idea we will now proceed to unfold. By-and-by, with the progress of science, and co-ordinately, its attributes will one by one come to view, in the shape of dogmas, rites, and ideal creations, and in accordance with laws which, from being abstract at first, will be assigned a place in the historical development of humanity. This synthetic part of science is not yet performed nor even begun; and for this reason we will confine our observations to its present condition. The physiological principle we wish to expose will, for the sake of generality, require to be of a more abstract tenor than we should find it in ancient worships; but we will not make it more abstract than modern religions—than Christianity. I repeat it; I employ the most abstract means for the purpose of generalization, also with the acquiescence of India, Persia, and the *Vêda*.

Three phenomena roused the intelligence of the Âryans,

even before their expansion beyond the valleys of the Oxus: they were *motion, life,* and *thought.* These three things, considered in all their bearings, comprised without exception every natural phenomenon. Now if a solution of these three could be discovered, we should possess the universal key of everything, providing that this solving principle be a real power, traceable to real facts, and not an abstract one.

By looking around them, these men of former ages found that the motion of inanimate things, manifesting itself on the surface of the earth, proceeded out of heat; heat again manifesting itself under the form of fire, lightning, or even wind. Lightning is fire hidden in the cloud, rising with it into space; fire before manifesting itself is contained in the vegetable matter which is eventually to feed it; lastly, wind is produced when the atmosphere is put in motion by a heat which on retreating rarefies or condenses it. Vegetables in their turn derive combustibleness from the sun, which causes them to grow from the accumulated heat, and atmosphere is heated by the sun's rays. These same rays draw up the waters of the earth into invisible vapours, then into clouds containing the lightning. Clouds disperse rain, feed rivers, which fill wind-tossed oceans. Thus all this motion which puts life into nature around us is the work of heat, and heat proceeds from the sun, which is "the celestial traveller" and universal motor. The word heat is here an abstract term, but the reality of phenomena cannot be explained by an abstraction; therefore heat in this sense is a scientific and not a religious conception. That is why the Âryans named the real principle to which they brought home the motion of all inanimate bodies not heat, but *fire* (*agni*).

Life also in their eyes seemed closely bound up with the idea of fire. The great periodical changes which take place in the vegetable world testify to an unmistakable affinity between those two things. When heat comes with the spring all the young plants begin to shoot, to be clothed in verdure and blossoms, to bear fruit, and at the close of the

year stand up in their fully developed strength; then as heat retires, there come languor and total cessation, and forests and plains stand as though struck to the heart with death. The grand phenomenon of the absorption of solar heat by planets, a phenomenon recently brought to light by science, was already discovered by men of remote antiquity; in the *Vêda* it is repeatedly mentioned. When they kindled fire on the hearth, they knew they were only forcing it to surrender the fire it had received from the sun. When they turned their attention to animals, they saw the undeniable bond which connects life with heat. Heat preserves life; they could find no animals existing without heat; they found, on the contrary, the display of vital energy in proportion with the animal's participation of heat. Cold produces first a numbness of life, and then death; the remains are the materials which vital heat has collected and moulded, and which again return into the vast domain of inanimate things. Equally conditional is heat upon animal life; for an animate being struck down by death cools by degrees, and no longer differs from the clay and the waters from which his body had been composed.

We should say now-a-days that when two things are reciprocally each other's cause, they must be identical. Fire, which is the motor of inorganic things, is therefore also the agent of those particular motions called *life* (*âyur âyavê*).

Let us remember however that the idea becomes more complicated with the culminating order of observed facts. Fire enters into animals, and maintains life there in several ways: directly on leaving the sun and sinking into them; or indirectly with their food, which already contains heat; or, finally, with the air they inhale. Deprived of food or air, animals cool and die. Even so with vegetation. Life exists and promotes itself on three conditions: the penetrating of fire into bodies in three shapes, of which one resides in the rays of the sun, another in igneous food, and the third in inhalation, which is air renewed by motion. Now these last two proceed in two different manners out

of the sun (*sûrya*). His heavenly fire is therefore the universal motor and the *father* of life; he whom he first engendered, his eternal *son*, is the earthly fire (*agni*), born from his rays; and his second eternal co-operator is air put in motion, which is also called the wind or the *spirit* (*vâyu*).

The things set forth here in semi-poetic and scientific language are extremely simple, and intelligible even to children. Nor does that which now follows require any higher degree of mental effort; a general observation of nature sufficed to convey it to the minds of the ancients. But nowhere in life is there a manifestation of thought. Moreover it is only found in beings whose life possesses a vast degree of energy, in animals. When an animal is seized with death, he collapses, he falls to the ground, becomes motionless, and loses both breath and heat; life and thought are extinguished together. If it be man whose senses are dead, it is no longer possible to extract a single word from his pale and frozen lips, or any sound of joy or sorrow from his sunken chest; the hand held out to him by friend, father, or child receives no pressure; every sign of intelligence or sentiment has ceased. Soon his body presents decomposition, dissolution, and evaporation, leaving only a blackened spot and bleached bones. And the mind, where is it? If experience shows it to be indissolubly bound up with life in such a way that life and thought cease together, it may be inferred that thought shares life's destiny, or rather, that the thinking principle is identical and not dual with the principle of life. But life is heat, and heat originates with the sun. Heat is therefore the motor of things, the agent of life and the principle of *thought* all in one.

The action is twofold, for it is heat as well as light. If the heavenly father were to recall light, and steep the world in darkness, intelligence at any rate would dwindle to almost total extinction; for thoughtful beings, that is to say, men and animals, principally obtain their ideas through vision, and especially the greatest idea of all, that by which we conceive the order of things, and by which

we distinguish them from the Divine principle which produces them.

By these two roads then the ancients were led to think that the principle of things is unique and universal, and in accordance with the word fire. But we who are their successors by so many centuries can safely say that fire thus conceived should be characterized by three epithets corresponding to its three functions: in the first case it is *physical*, in the second it is *psychological* or vital, in the third it is *metaphysical* or Divine.

When the Âryans of India and of Persia, especially the former, had arrived at this latter conclusion, they began to apply a series of profound analyses to the phenomena of the mind, a task which our western philosophers are still far from having accomplished. We shall not enter into them here; for though the greater part of those analyses were made by priests, they were never associated with matters of religion; they struck out an independent path for themselves. It must be remarked however, that the agent of the mind having been identified with the agent of life and motion, it was still possible to distinguish elements of a different nature and, as it were, degrees in the mind. There is indeed a great number of ideas upon which men disagree, for the reason that they arise in each individual mind from individual points of view. Others again there are on which men always agree, because their subjects are of a simple and universal nature, with but one aspect. These latter make up what the ancients called the domain of reason; they are innate, they illumine the mind during the course of life, they neither grow nor decrease. The other portion of the mind is subject to birth and death. Among those eternal thoughts there is one, the centre of all others, the promoter of different forms of thoughts; it is the thought of the absolute, it is the principle of science. The efforts of the brain to elucidate it is what is called the science (*vêda*); speech which expresses it is the most exalted and comprehensive of all speeches, it is the word *par excellence;* and the voice which emits it is a sacred psalm. That psalm,

that word, that speech, that science, that reason, that thought, all are in all the prevailing element of things that exist; that element is at the same time the agent of life and the first motor. All these collected characteristics belong to one and the same being, which has nothing abstract nor anything individual, according to human notion. Every science, every worship, every tongue gives it a different name; but its real name is God, the universal Father and Author of life, *Ahura*, *Brahmâ*.

From this rough sketch of the fundamental doctrine common to all great religions—common to ours and to that of the Indians and Persians,—we see that fire, conceived as a physical agent, kindles in order to explain the phenomena of life, and becomes a metaphysical being, when regarded as a supreme and absolute thought. All religions have not attached the same importance to each of the three parts assigned to the igneous principle. The inferior religions have given prevalence to the first and perhaps the second: such have been the Greek, Latin, and Germanic, known as pagan religions. Mazdeism and Brâhminism assigned the first two functions to the interpretation of nature; from the time however when they began to lean more to the third, they rose to the ranks of the most spiritualistic religions. Without entirely forgetting the two first functions of the Divine principle, Christianity invested the third with an almost exclusive importance; the metaphysical nature of God almost wholly absorbed that function; regarding it ever from the aspect of His defined attributes, philosophers and most of the Christian doctors ended by severing Him from the world, and giving Him an almost overdrawn personality.

The diversity of religions has arisen chiefly from the different manners of conceiving and valuing the complex function of the principle which the early Âryans discovered. With certain races the physical function of the fire in some sort prevailed, and brought about the dismembering of religion and ultimately polytheism, from the consideration paid to the other functionary phenomena. Then the

priests and poets and people transformed every natural course of things into a Divine figure, to whose service they raised temples and altars; thus the great collective living power which moves the earth subdivided itself into an ever-increasing and more or less inevitable and consecutive number of lesser powers. Some peoples, again, whose minds were solely occupied with the higher functions of fire, quite disregarded the secondary functions, and considered as impious the institution of polytheism, forgetting that, after all, it is founded upon real observations and on firm though narrow ground; whilst with some other people the fire on the altar, that is to say, taken in its sacerdotal function, ranked first, and the science of reality gave way to the ceremonies of that worship. The Musulmans disclaimed the physical or psychological function of the Divine principle: thence sprang their metaphysical and abstract conception of God, and with it the naturally fatal consequences.

These are great but unfathomed subjects that science has yet to grapple with. Let us however bear this in mind, that possibly each Divine function may have been regarded as a consecutive consequence, as the second function proceeding out of the first, and the third out of the second—a supposition which is indeed borne out by facts. The physical fire became the symbol of life, and the vital fire became the symbol or figure of the metaphysical being of God, which last symbolism presented the most apparent and, in a way, the most ostensible element of the doctrine, and constituted that portion in religions which is called worship. Here are a few details taken from the *Vêda*.

It tells us that on an eminence visible to all the people they lighted a fire, which was to represent the universal agent of life and of thought. The whole ceremony was of a symbolic nature, replete with significance, unrevealed to the impious, but palpable to the initiated. The fire was produced by the rubbing together of two pieces of igneous wood; that was its nativity. The feeble spark, often called "*the little child*" in the *Vêda*, was directed to a handful of dried grass, which blazed and spread to the twigs and

branches heaped up on the altar; but the fire would have burnt itself out after reaching the topmost branch: therefore the priest poured into it the clarified butter and the *sôma*, the fire after that receiving the name of *anointed* (*añjâna, akta, agni*); it displayed a mighty power and shed splendour around. Every creature was summoned to come and witness this spectacle of life concentrated, as it were, in a small space, and spending all its pent up energies on a few feet of ground.

The reader will doubtless see that *the butter* of sacrifice and the *sôma* in this case represent the whole of animate nature. For the Âryans of central Asia took the cow as the most perfect representative type of animals, her milk as the type of food, cream as the better part of milk, butter as the purer part of cream, and melted or clarified butter as the essence of butter itself. When poured on the flames it is entirely consumed, leaving no sort of trace; it is therefore the most combustible animal matter, the best and most efficient food for fire and for the display of its energies. It is fire taking a bodily shape and igniting its own substance. The *sôma*, for which the West substituted wine and the North beer, repeats the same order of arguments, only this time in the vegetable world. It is an alcoholic liquid; the juice of the unripe swallow-wort, fermented for three days, changed into a spirituous liquid, and finally into resplendent flames when poured on the fire. To men who drank of it, it caused that inward sensation of heat which roused their energies and inflamed their courage. Therefore the *sôma* was soon adopted as the vegetable type of liquid food and combustible matter; that is to say, as a perfect receptacle for fire and a profound symbol of life.

From the earliest times forward fire has unceasingly been kindled on the altars, and has there presented to the eye the embodiment of life and thought. Fire did not always play a symbolic part in the primordial times, or even in the hymns of the *Vêda;* but in proportion as religion became more spiritual that part increased. With us, the fire which burns on our altars, and which is renewed every year at

Easter, the taper, the wine, the oil of certain ceremonies, are but the symbols of a profound metaphysic, more or less rightly interpreted by the doctors of divinity, symbols whose unchanging formulas are perpetuated by the ritual.

The easily proved fact that each inferior function of the fire became the symbol of a superior one is of exceeding importance for the history of religions and for the estimation of their efficacy. Man has no control over life except by means of heat and food, two things which he applies at will. He can however only benefit his life by them when he has learnt to know them and discovered the laws to which life itself is subjected. Superiority therefore always belongs to those men whose metaphysical power of the brain searches out and produces most. Naturally they alone rose highest in religious communities at a time when science had not yet become secularized. Others could realize no functions of the igneous principle but the lowest ones; they could not rise above the symbols and ceremonies of worship; the obscurer their understanding, the greater the importance they attached to the material part of religion. When any community lost sight of the metaphysical element of its religion it also gradually lost the fruits of its original purpose; deteriorated in mind and estate, it sank again into barbarism, until rescued by a new religion, which, as it is said, "raised it again from the dead."

There have been great nations in ancient times for whom religious metaphysics remained almost a sealed book, though it may have existed within the sanctuary walls. Archæology and the science of languages both prove that these nations, Âryans like ourselves, were in possession of the early and probably entire doctrines, and that they only quitted the common cradle at a time when this doctrine already contained its principal and established elements. The causes by which Greeks, Latins, and people of the North all lost this doctrine would on investigation call forth points not at issue with the present question. Another vastly important subject would be the searching into the causes by virtue of which the entire doctrine preserved was

among the two great nations of the East, and came to be only partly adopted by the Jews. Under what circumstances and from what causes did it reappear at the time of Tiberius, on the coast of the Levant, and spread thence under the name of Christianity over the entire West? It is a great study, which at this present occupies the greatest minds: but that study is far from being accomplished; it is indeed only in its first elements. Yet we cannot but admit that religions were and are still kindled by one common principle—by one mother-thought. This is the principle we must endeavour to trace out from among their profound as well as their superficial analogies. Worships also, in their various forms, must be led back to the common stock, in elucidation of this branch of the science.

I have stated before that three orders of facts must enter into the study of religious problems, and that it is almost a matter of impossibility to obtain any definite solution by means of records alone. In religions there is something else besides abstract dogmas, else they would be mere philosophies. Besides theories, that were at first darkly expressed, and which had afterwards to be expounded by the doctors of the Church, there are symbols and rites; that is to say, the figured representations of dogmas and subsequent practices. The scholars of our day make dogmas their earliest business, endeavouring to discover their historic descent throughout the books in which they are contained. Those books are generally the polemical writings of doctors and the sacred records by which they are guided. Hence De Bunsen has been enabled to show, by highly enlightened comparisons, that the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are none other than the dogmas in the *Zend-Avesta*, transmitted down to St. John and to us by an uninterrupted line of initiated writers. However these books are not everything. Side by side with these written monuments we see the dawn of a new world, a world unknown to our predecessors, but developing into the most valuable evidence of the religious science.

So far our knowledge of eastern figured monuments is very limited, nor may we hope to gain much from individual travels. No serious results will be obtained till Governments, in the interests of progress, cause permanent missions to be established for purposes of exploration. We of the West are surrounded with monuments; they are at our very doors and under our eyes, and they mostly belong to Christianity; the catacombs of Rome, no doubt, are very prolific, and so are many ancient sanctuaries of Italy, Europe, of western Asia, and Egypt. These monuments are generally symbolic and open to interpretation, which is sometimes given by Christian authors; but rarely do they succeed in solving every problem. No Christian book, for instance, explains the origin of the *sign of the cross*, for the simple reason that the sign dates further back than Christianity; so our investigations must tend in another direction.

Now there is an entire class of writings to which exegetes have never turned their attention; *viz.* the rituals, some of whose functions are daily performed in our very midst without conveying the slightest meaning. And how do we account for this ignorance?

The greater part of our scholars who study religious problems are Protestants. Now the Reformation has, if not suppressed, certainly greatly diminished the ceremonies of worship and some dogmas which without ceremonies mean nothing. Protestants are either ignorant of or wilfully indifferent to the observances of the Catholic Church; and when once they are launched upon the road of science, they altogether forget that nearly all the acts of the Greek or the Roman Church date back to the beginning of Christianity.

Catholic communities, we know, are composed, on the one hand, of worshippers, who take part in the religious service, without however troubling their heads as to the origin, history, or meaning of its elements; and, on the other hand, of non-worshippers, who content themselves with taking a passing and abstract interest in the religious

questions of the day; whilst the priest performs mechanically the duties of his calling, conformably with the teaching he has had and with the traditions of his Church. As a matter of fact, our clergy have scarcely produced one theologian since the time that ultramontane principles put an end to theology. It is supposed that the critical study of religions suggests disbelief; whereas it merely gasps for that freedom of thought without which every scientific investigation comes to the ground at that spot where dogma threatens to be misunderstood. And yet who more fitted for religious science than priests, whose functions place them in the very centre of books and symbols and rites, whose elements enter into their daily functions?

No doubt these sacerdotal functions place them, with regard to science, in a particularly difficult position. We are all of us quite convinced now-a-days, that nearly the whole of Christianity is of oriental origin; and yet the priesthood are never supposed to overstep the limits of the Christian circle and enter the region where dogmas, rites, and symbols have their Asiatic origin. Of course, by thus carefully abstaining from inquiry, they ward off those scruples which never fail to overtake the scholar, and which in a priest are regarded, however unjustly, as faithlessness. Now the co-operation of a sacerdotal body that never consults any records beyond those contained in the New and Old Testaments or the Fathers' commentaries would be of very little value; even an archæological priest would only do for Christian antiquities what the Brahmins did for the *Vêda*. Instead of giving their exact definition and real origin, he would be able to discover no agency in the symbols but a Christian one, suggesting likewise Christian thoughts, rendered by figured explanations. At best, he might admit the precession of the temple and synagogue in the history of Christian rites; but at that point his vista would close. Indeed, so long as Christian archæology persists in blocking up the retrospect half way, it will remain a lifeless nomenclature of facts set forth by a factitious, arbitrary, and sometimes puerile explanation—a very im-

potence in the solution of grave questions, which it will have to pass over from sheer incapacity. What is Christ? What is Mary? What are the mysteries of incarnation, of the ascension, of transfiguration, and of the renewal of the fire? What are the Magi? What is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? On all these questions Christian archæology has to be silent.

This means then the building up of an entire science, which is comparative religious archæology; without its aid each special archæology comes in collision with unsolvable problems. But when established, it enters as an integral part into the science of religions.

There are in the study of Christianity, and in all other religions, things besides questions of exegesis. If it be important for its history that the dogmas be traced through all the various expressions they received before the coming of Christ, there is quite a collection of rites and symbols whose history should also be written, and whose origin should be tracked. Nearly all the elements of Christian worship preceded Jesus. If we go beyond our era and read the Bible, we shall see that very few of them belong to Judaism; we shall also see that wherever there seemed to be analogy, the Christian element made a divergence from the Mosaic element, and generally went in an opposite direction, lest they should be assimilated. What we conclude from this is, that we must not expect to find the origin of Christian rites and symbols among the Jews, but elsewhere, in an antisemitic civilization.

Now if we except the essentially local religion of ancient Egypt, there are, besides the Semites, only the Âryans. The searching into rites and symbols does not however connect Christianity as exclusively with Persia as some scholars would have it: the book of Zoroaster gives an insufficient explanation of both; that explanation, that "key to science," as the evangelist says, is only to be found in India. Once science has arrived at that point, there will unroll itself a wholly new horizon, studded with Indians, Persians, and Christians; but the Jewish nation,

brought down to its natural size, will show nothing but an almost imperceptible dot upon that horizon. Beyond the Indians and Persians there appears not Buddha, nor Zoroaster, nor even the *Vêda*, but a primordial Âryan doctrine whence the *Vêda* and Zoroaster, and after them Christianity, issued one and all. This is the great fact we must bring to light.

Now let us admit that Christian dogmas spring from central Asia, and that their plainly recognised formulas are contained in the books of Zoroaster; it remains to be proved whether the doctrine of the Magi presents the oldest known form of the Âryan religion. Orientalists all unanimously aver to the contrary, and rightly. It is a certain fact, that the doctrine of the *Zend-Avesta* sprang from a reform, and that the fact of rebelling placed it in many respects in opposition to the ancient beliefs of the Âryans. All the world admits too, for the monuments are there to prove it, that those ancient beliefs were carried into India by the Âryans of the South-east, and that there they engendered the Brâhmin religion. The *Vêda*, which contains them, may possibly not date further back than the oldest part of the *Zend-Avesta;* but it nevertheless represents the ancient beliefs anterior to Zoroaster. To enable us to take into full account the valuable reform brought about by this legislator, we must draw a parallel between this book and the *Vêda*, and note down the new elements which he introduced into the faith of the Âryans. Now if we set up this comparison, not with the entire *Vêda*, but with its more ancient hymns, it will be seen that the Ormuzd (*Ahura-mazda*) of Zoroaster is nothing else than the Asura of the ancient beliefs. That Asura is the sun, which by its heat and its light engenders life and thought. But the Medo-Persian doctrine has spiritualized this primitive notion; it has substituted an ideal conception for a material object; it made out of sun and fire the early symbol and product of a superior and invisible being, to which it applied the name of Ahura, and that word henceforth meant living or principle of life. On the other hand, it

retained nearly all the ancient Âryan gods, but classified into a regular hierarchy, at whose head it placed this Ahura. These deities, angels, or genii bear in the *Zend-Avesta* the name of *ahura*, just as in the *Vêda* the gods are also *asuras*.

Those beliefs then underwent only a very slight outward change when they adopted the Medo-Persian form. But the reform, and the struggle out of which it sprang, give evidence of a division, of a schism having taken place in the heart of the Âryan community at the time when Zoroaster founded the religion of Ormuzd. The nature of this schism is clearly shown in the *Avesta*, in which the Âryans of the opposite faction are being accused of polytheism, and their gods (*dêvas*) transformed into evil genii. In the *Vêda* the nature of this schism is not depicted in the slightest degree, but in records of early Brâhminism, in which we find the *dêvas* turning into objects of worship and the *asuras* into the enemies of the gods. Consequently Mazdeism arose out of the debasement of the gods, and the glorification of the *asuras*, and especially the foremost among them, Ahura-mazda, Ormuzd; Brâhminism arose out of the debasement of the *asuras* and the glorification of the gods, and eventually of the greatest among them, Brahmâ.

The *Vêda* however represents an earlier epoch than schism, and therefore contains the common dogmas whence sprang the two religions. Of course, once they were morally and geographically separated, they both underwent that gradual unfolding which is always produced by the individual mental power of the doctors when directed upon religious systems : the Ahura-mazda of ancient times was put almost on the same level with the spirit of evil, and soon there rose above it a supreme metaphysical being which received the name of *Akarana*, that is to say, the *Inactive ;* and so in India did the Brâhmins raise for themselves an ideal of the neuter and inactive principle, than which no conception could be loftier, receiving the name of Brahm. Thus were the two faces of the primitive reli-

gion drawn together again; through an inward evolutionary movement were the paths once more brought to the common starting-point; when drawn up into a parallel by Alexandrian scholars, these latter could detect in them but one unique system, which was based upon a physical reality and whose summit pointed to an irretrievable pantheism.

Was this the seed-pod of Christianity? Science has proved it to be the abstract portion of its dogmas. Thus the first step towards the solution of that problem is made. Other documents will enable us to make the final. In fact, if it be an accepted theory, on the one hand, that the Christian dogmas emanate from Mazdeism, and, on the other hand, that Mazdeism is itself the Persian form of a doctrine which was primarily mentioned in the *Vêda*, we must conclude from this that the *Vêda* alone can give an account of Zoroastrian and Christian dogmas, and that we must look for the primordial source of our religion in the hymns of the *Vêda*, and not in the Bible.

Has that conclusion been confirmed by the comparative study of the *Vêda* and Christian books? It has been, in the most complete manner, for not only dogmas but Christian symbols and rites are to be met entire in the Vêdic religion. Of course we must take into account the progress which the human mind accomplished during the fifteen or twenty centuries that elapsed between the hymns of the *Vêda* and the Augustan epoch, and the transformations likely to affect an idea in a transit of such length among such varied civilizations.

M. Michel Nicolas has proved, by an exhaustive study of the Apostles' Creed, that that exposition of Christian faith has in the course of its existence been added to and developed, and that the sole formula required by the early Christians was simply this: "I believe in the *Father*, the *Son*, and the Holy Ghost."

De Bunsen has proved that this formula is not Jewish, and that it comes from Zoroaster. Finally, we find in the *Nirukta* of *Yâska* that the earliest Vêdic authors admitted

but three gods, *Savitri*, *Agni*, and *Vâyu*, and that all others were merely the different forms or names of one of the three, whose titles were derived from various natural phenomena and from divine functions.

The word Savitri means *producer* or father. His place is in heaven, which frequently causes him in the *Vêda* to be *designed* by the name of heavenly father. Virtually he is the sun; but in the whole book the sun is only spoken of as the chariot or the wheel of Savitri. Agni is the fire. Fire as a myth occupies an important place in nearly all religions. Kuhn has set forth, in a learned work, its principal transformations in the West. The Agni of the hymns is fire in all the direct or figurative acceptations of the word; its home is on earth, on the domestic hearth or the altar; it is the life and thought in each being that lives and thinks; its birth is mystic, for in some cases it has an earthly priest whose name is *Twaštri*, that is to say, carpenter; in another case, coming from heaven by a mysterious road, it is conceived in the maternal womb by the action of Vâyu, which is the spirit. Vâyu in the material sense is the wind, that is to say, air in motion, without which it is impossible for the fire to burn or to kindle; in the metaphysical sense, it is the spirit of life, and the author of immortality for living beings. This is the earliest form in which the dogma of the trinity appears in history: sun, fire, and wind.

The question will be asked: Is the trinity then a material conception? The *Vêda* enables us unhesitatingly to answer, No. All through the hymns, side by side with these three physical objects, is to be found an ideal conception, a living being, of which they are, as it were, but the image or the instrument. Moreover, when their inner nature is investigated, they are everywhere substantially identified; so that, concealed beneath a polytheistic appearance, there is already that unity of the supreme principle which the last psalmists of that period described so plainly. Now, in a material sense, the sun acts principally by his heat and his light, which compose Agni himself; and if life on earth, and thought with it, develop with the return of each year,

it is caused by the power of the sun's rays. But just as thought, which is always accompanied by life, is not a phenomenon of a physical order, and escapes again with the senses, even so should the author of life, by reason of his being the author of thought, be conceived as a metaphysical being, superior to matter. Hence we find throughout the hymns the physical theory of fire joining hands with the most exalted philosophical theory. This doctrine is therefore two-sided, as should be every great interpretation of a reality. This parallelism of the material and metaphysical worlds is to be found in the *Avesta* and in India; likewise we have it complete in our rituals, in our symbols, and in the Christian legend. Let me add that the presence of the ideal dogma of the trinity in the *Vêda* must not astonish us, for the human mind enters upon science through metaphysics. It founds it upon an exceedingly just and complete, but very vague collective view of nature; but by-and-by, when the mind retraces its earliest impressions, it builds up again, and this time with deliberate and scientific accuracy, the same edifice it had once raised in a few days. Metaphysics is the foundation, and positive science the erection.

There is one person in the Âryan trinity who has played a more important part in religion than the rest, and that is Agni. His action in physical nature commences with the sun, in which he dwells for ever and makes his *glory;* in this planet's oblique course he travels from east to west, beyond the clouds; he is seen sitting on the right of the father, because the father advances first. There Agni reigns in all his splendour. He is the king of heaven, the crown in the atmosphere; his grandeur surpasses heaven and earth; heaven and earth obey him; all divine beings acknowledge him. From his lofty place he sees all things; he knows all things, the depth of the heavens, the races of gods and men, and all their secrets, for all beings are contained in him. In a lower region, Agni shines in the lap of the clouds, amidst thunder and lightning; seated on a chariot, glowing with lightning, he is invincible, and scatters

and withers his foes. Then he is called *Indra*, which means *king;* he dispenses fruitful rain, and life with it.

It is however within the sacred circle that the *rôle* and the theory of Agni are unfolded; let us draw up its principal features. The sacred fire has for father Twaṣṭṛi, and for mother the divine Mâyâ. Twaṣṭṛi is the divine carpenter, who prepares the stack and the two pieces of wood called *aranî*, whose friction is to emit the divine child. Mâyâ is the personification of the productive power, in a feminine shape; each divine being has its *mâyâ*.

Agni's birth is heralded to the astronomer-priest by the appearance of a star, called in Sanskrit *Savanagraha*. The instant he has seen it the priest tells the glad news to the people; the horizon then begins to be tinged with the rising sun, and the people come from hill and vale to worship the new-born infant. No sooner has the feeble spark sprung from the mother's womb, that is to say, from one of the pieces of wood in which dwells the divine Mâyâ, than it takes the name of child. Some of the hymns in the *Vêda* speak in rapturous poetry of this frail divine creature that has just been born. The parents deposit their child on some straw; close to it stands the mystic cow, that is to say, milk and butter. With some other Âryans it is the custom to substitute the ass which has borne on its back the juice-yielding fruit. Before the child stands a holy priest, Vâyu's representative; he holds in his hand a little oriental fan in the shape of a flag, with which he fans that feeble life. Thence the child is carried to the altar, upon which he displays such a power that his worshippers are struck with amazement; everything around is drowned in a flood of light. His flickering flame breaks through the darkness and reveals the whole world; angels (*dêvas*) and men rejoice, and, prostrating themselves, they sing a hymn of praise. The rising sun on the left, and the full moon on the right, stand on the brink of the horizon, and by their very pallor they render him their homage.

But how did that transformation in Agni take place?

Thus. At the same moment when one priest placed the infant god on the altar, another poured the sacred liquid, the spirituous *sôma*, on his head, and anointed him by pouring on him the butter of the holy sacrifice. After which he is called the "anointed" (*akta*). Those inflammable materials produced his growth; his flame rises up in a circle of glory; he shines in the midst of a cloud of smoke, which rises like pillars to heaven, the light mingling with the bright luminaries above. The "god of light reveals to men that which was hidden." From his throne above he teaches the doctors; he is the *guru* of *gurus* (master of masters); and then takes the name of Jâtavêdas, that means, the one inborn with science. I would beg my readers who are not acquainted with the hymns to bestow their full attention on the following instructive and pregnant extract.

There is a plant whose juices are drawn from the night dews under the rays of the moon, and which, being ripened by the sun, whose fires it concentrates, supplies to men a savoury juice, first sweet, then clarified by fermentation, and lastly filled with igneous combustible matter, with the veritable spirit of life. When consumed by fire it breaks into most ardent and mighty flames; when consumed by man, it fills his soul with fire and his frame with renewed vigour. This plant varies according to latitudes. In India it is an asclepias called *sôma;* in central Asia, with the Medo-Persians, it is called *hoama;* in the West it is the vine. This shrub was bestowed on men through divine favour by a heavenly bird, called *çyêna*, hawk; and thus the fire from above concealed in the twig was brought down by him in a rapid flight.

The juice of that plant has always been the sacred liquid with all Âryan nations. Agni dwells in it, is ever present in it, though invisible, which the Vêdic poets never tire of repeating and recognising as an acknowledged dogma of theirs. The vessel which contains the juice also contains Agni in a mystic form, and as Agni can escape from it in the movable shape of fire, this vessel likewise contains Agni's mother, the divine Mâyâ. It is the *kandili* of

the Greek Church, with its holy oil and inextinguishable flame.

But just as the sacred liquid is taken as the emblem of all liquid food in nature, so is solid food represented by the cake, which in Vêdic India is made of flour and butter, both highly nourishing and combustible materials. So that Agni also dwells in solid offerings; on which point the authors of the *Vêda* leave no manner of doubt.

Those offerings are dedicated to the sacred fire upon the altar. The fire consumes them, transforms them, and raises them to heaven in odorous vapours, where they group themselves with the glorious congregation of divine beings, and finally with the heavenly father, who presides at this ceremony. Agni then is the mediator of this offering, the sacrificer and mystic priest; and since the offering contains him under a material appearance, he is a sacrificer offering up himself as a victim. At this juncture the sacred feast took place. The holy Vêdic table was spread on the grass (*barhis*, *kuça*, or *dûrba*); the priests first and then the guests at the holy banquet each received a share of the host, which they ate as the chosen food containing Agni.

The moral effect produced by this primordial communion was extraordinary. For Agni being life and thought, he incorporated his participators with the same life and thought, and with a brotherhood according to the flesh and the spirit; and as this worship not only included men of Âryan race, but all the members of the community, they adhered together and created and cherished the sentiment called in Latin *amor patriæ*. Moreover the Agni of the *Vêda*, being the life of each individual, was also the *mediator* who transmitted the life and authorship of generations; a masculine principle (*puruša*) which lived in the fathers and revived with the sons, "the husband of women and the bridegroom of maidens." He dwelt amply in the father of the family, in the master of the house; more amply in the king, chief of the people; and in the highest degree in the priest, whose mind conceived him, whose voice sang to him, and whose hands and blessing (*swasti*) kindled him

on the altar. When a man died, the fire of his life and mind left him; with stiffened limbs, lying on the ground, his breath returned to Vâyu, and the light of his eyes to the sun.

"But there is an immortal part, that, O Agni, which thou must warm with thy rays, inflame with thy fires. O Jâtavêdas, carry it to the land of the faithful in the glorious shape made by thee" (*Vêda* x. 16).

That world where dwells eternal light and felicity, where radiant worlds do shine, where every new-born desire is fulfilled, is situated in the heavenly regions where reigns the eternal father; it is paradise, the *paradêça* of the Medo-Persians, the home of immortality.

Moreover Agni has the power to restore the dead to life again. He raised Subandhu. When the brethren of this youth had pronounced the formula of resurrection over him, Agni appeared to them in the midst of the ceremony, and standing before the lifeless clay, he said:

"Behold the father, behold the mother, behold thy life returning to thee; thus art thou delivered, O friend. Come hither, arise."

"I have brought back the soul of my beloved from Yama, son of Vivaswat, for life and not for death, yea, for salvation" (*Vêda* x. 60, 7, 10).

Subandhu arose, and his brethren sang the hymn of the resurrection of life.

I will not further dissect the theory of Agni as it stands in the Indian hymns; the inquiring reader may refer to our *Essai sur le Vêda*, and better still to the *Vèda* itself. It would indeed be a boon if a clever Indian scholar, versed in the mystical theories of other Âryan and Christian worships, would undertake to reproduce a more precise translation than that of M. S. Langlois, and more intelligible than the existing English or German versions; for the text of the hymns is so inaccessible to most people, and yet their acquaintance so requisite for the progress of religious science, that without such a translation of the *Vêda* we cannot with any confidence look forward to the attainment of that goal which has been assigned to those

grand subjects. I here resign my place to experts and to critical examination, and once more take up the subject of Christian symbols. It is impossible to dispose in regular order of the questions raised by them, unless one distinguish the three elements collected together in the fundamental dogma, and which I shall call *the theory of Christ*, *the legend of Christ*, and *the history of Jesus*.

Everybody knows that the theory of Christ preceded the advent of the Lord. The Jews had been long expecting the Messiah; they had partly beheld him in certain historic personages, such as Cyrus; Simon the magician declared himself to be the Messiah; at the time of Augustus the coming of the Messiah was in every heart. The Jews rejected him in Jesus, and rightly so; for St. Paul, and then those who took up his views like St. Luke, and those who exaggerated them like Marcion, these men, I say, maintained stoutly that Christ was not the Messiah of the Hebrews, but the Son of the heavenly Father, come to save all men, notwithstanding the law. But the theory of Christ the Son of God was entirely contained in the Apocrypha of Alexandria and of Palestine, and to be found with the Jewish sects formerly under Âryan influence at the time of the captivity. In an ideal form it was contained in the *Zend-Avesta;* and, lastly, we have just been tracing it in a double form, material and metaphysical, in the Indian hymns. Now the authors of those hymns speak of it as having been born long before them, and as having been symbolized in a great national worship of which *Ribhu*, who is Orpheus, is represented as the organizer. This tradition, which was also held by Greeks and Indians, carries us back to the time when the branches had not yet separated from the Âryan trunk, and when that race dwelt in its united entirety along the valleys of the Oxus. It is there we must seek the origin of the theory of Christ.

Is it likely that so beautiful a theory as the one which vivifies the whole worship, and gives so surpassingly a correct account of life and thought here below, could stride across Asia for twenty or thirty centuries without giving rise

to some legend? Most unlikely; in fact, nearly every element of Christ's legend is to be found in the *Vêda*—His double origin, His miraculous conception, His birth before the dawn amidst strange circumstances, His baptism in the water, His holy unction from which His name is derived, His early wisdom, His transfiguration, His miracles, His ascension into heaven, where He dwells again with the heavenly Father, who had begotten Him before all worlds to be the Saviour of men.

Many among us will doubtless be greatly surprised to discover those facts, and many others besides, two thousand years before the gospel records. It comes like a trouble upon us to find the legend of Christ thus accounted for, causing the gospel to assume the attributes of an allegory, and supporting the arguments of the Marcionites and of Apollos, the rival of St. Paul. That trouble becomes more painful even, when it is seen, by the life of Apollonius of Tyana, so aptly termed a pagan Christian by M. A. Réville, with what facility myth was at that time mistaken for reality, and legend for history. But there is one anchor to which the ship of faith may always be fastened: and that is the reality of Jesus' life and preaching, a reality not only borne out by Christian books, but by uncourted testimony. We must remember that no community at any epoch was ever in such dire need of moral and practical reform as the Græco-Roman world; we must also take into consideration the universal nature of Agni, which is the greatest manifestation of the Divine nature in the physical and moral world; and admit gladly, at last, that if this primordial Christ really dwells in each of us, it could have found no fitter habitation than in Christ incarnate. Both legend and theory were therefore vested in Jesus: the dogmas which Babylon transmitted in unbroken tradition, and whose primitive form is contained in the *Vêda*, these dogmas at one bound reached the West. As for this new light thrown on the pre-Christian period, I hereby solemnly aver that, to my mind, it does not by one hair's breadth detract from the majesty of Christ.

CHAPTER IX.

UNITY OF RITES.

I NOW wish to speak of a worship practised in the western world and of figures, both of which were engendered by oriental doctrines. That worship has found a home in non-protestant Churches, and has continued unchanged almost ever since. Its primitive rites are contained in those ancient books of the Church which are called *sacramentarian*, and of which the oldest is that of the Pope Gelasius and of St. Gregory the Great. But long before that the essential elements of worship had been determined and were practised in the Church. Now the careless indifference with which Christians treat the ceremonials of their religion is deeply to be deplored. They seem satisfied with merely sitting out a service they do not understand; they deem it sufficient to know that some holy days of the year are more important than others, and that the greatest of all is Easter Sunday: but the harmony of events has no interest for them. Now Christian rites taken as a whole must be viewed from two aspects: they recur daily, and their centre is the canon of the mass; they recur annually, and their centre is Easter Week. Every service day or night is either a preparation for or a consequence of the mass; every service during the year is either a preparation for or a consequence of Holy Week. Daily rites are however merely a reduction of the annual rites which constitute essential Christian worship. That worship is appointed according to the sun's and the moon's progress. The birth of Christ coincides with the winter solstice. Easter follows closely upon the spring equinox. At the summer solstice we celebrate the feast of the forerunner, and in the villages of France

they light what are called the fires of St. John. Other feast days are divided periodically into different times of the year, according to a rule which ought to be compared with Vêdic ceremonies.

The greatest time of the Christian year is Holy Week. We might turn to the missal, or, better still, to the great churches of Lyons, Paris, Rome, for the component ceremonies of that week; and we should find, not only the whole year converging towards the Holy Week, but also the Holy Week converging towards a point upon which must culminate the entire system of Christian worship. That point is erroneously conjectured to be Easter Sunday; but any one who reads and understands the ancient missals will soon realize that all the rites, the hymns, and records of that day are a celebration of the event which took place the night before, which continued until the dawn. That event is a double one—it is at once and indissolubly both the *resurrection of Christ* and the *resurrection of the fire.*

The service of Holy Saturday is truly of ideal beauty and of profound philosophy. I cannot render it here as I would; but I beg every one who studies religions to follow it up book in hand in a fresh and vigorous spirit. If he have any recollection of the great Vêdic ceremonies, he will here find them all again surrounded with prayer, which will remind him of our ancestors' most sublime and sense-enslaving hymns. He will behold the "eternal gates" of the sacred realms through which shall pass the "great king," the divine fire of life still within the chalice (*samudra*) in the shape of Jonas; the Father's indefectible light; the Spirit penetrating into the baptismal font as the secret agent of goodness; fire appearing from the friction of stones which has taken the place of the *aranî* in the West, and then the taper—the great paschal symbol. In the early days of the Church the ceremony of the fire and the candle took place on the Sunday, at the second nocturn, between three and six o'clock in the morning; that was the dawn, for on the day of the sun's equinox the sun rises at six o'clock. Fire having been brought to life is used for

lighting the paschal candle; the deacon, clothed in white vesture, takes a reed, which is the *vêtasa* of the hymns, at the end of which are three candles, setting forth the three altars within the Vêdic precincts. Each one is lighted with the new fire, and with these words each time, "the light of Christ." Then the paschal candle is kindled, whereof the wax takes the place of the sacrificial butter, the "mother bee" replacing the cow of the Indians, and the wick instead of the wood on the hearth. Finally Christ appears under His real name of *Agnus*, which is possibly *Agni*, in the Latin tongue, and the following prayer is said, which in a few sentences reveals the hidden meaning of the entire paschal rite:

"O truly happy night, which stripped the Egyptians (in the *Vêda* the Dasyus), and enriched the Hebrews (the Âryans)! This night, in which heavenly things mingle with things of earth, likewise Divine things with human! We pray to Thee, O Lord, that this candle, consecrated to the honour of Thy name, may continue indefectible, in order to destroy the gloom of this night, and, having been well received, it may dwell with the luminaries on high. That the morning star (*lucifer matutinus*) may see its flames; that star, I say, which never sinks, and having risen out of the inferior regions, serenely shines on human kind."

For the remainder of the day they celebrate the new birth of Christ, the Christians of the East going into the streets and fields and houses, telling one another the glad news: *Χριστὸς ἀνέστη*, "Christ is risen." The sacred feast of which all Christians were to partake that day is the *agape* of charity and mutual love. It is expressed by these words: *Congregavit nos in unum Christi amor*, "The love of Christ has made us one." This one dominating thought of Easter Week is exactly so expressed in the last hymn to Agni:

"Let your hearts agree, ye mortals assembled here; have but one prayer, one wish, one thought, one mind. In this sacrifice I offer up your prayer and your burnt-offering, brought here by one common consent. Let your hearts and wills and your souls be in communion, and you will be blessed" (*Vêda* x. 191).

This concentric rite of which I have just spoken was, according to tradition, by Christ Himself substituted for the paschal rite of the Hebrews, when, after having celebrated this latter with His disciples, He instituted the eucharist. On that day He offered Himself as a new victim, after which no blood was ever to flow again; a victim which should henceforth be replaced on the altar by the twofold offering of the mystic body of Christ, the Church recalling this by the following words: *Pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus*, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." That suppression of bloody sacrifices was adopted by the Therapeutes and the Essenes, the preservers of Âryan tradition among the Jews, and it was almost developed in the *Vêda;* for there we nearly always find Agni offering up himself on the altar, under the twofold symbol of the holy cake and spirituous juice of the *sôma*, or, as we have it, of bread and wine.

Before touching on the subject of figured monuments, I must draw the reader's attention to the name of *Christ* and to the qualification of *King*, with which it is generally associated. It is a bone of contention, which arose among Christians in the earliest days of the Church, some taking this qualification in the literal sense, others in a figurative sense; but no one was ever able to explain why the title was preserved when it was only given by the Jews in derision. Here are the *Vêda's* own words:

To Agni.

"The young mother carries the royal child mysteriously concealed in her womb, . . . the queen bare him; from early impregnation the germ grew. I saw him at his birth when his mother was delivered of him. Yea, I saw this god of many bright colours, . . . and I poured on him the immortal oil. . . . I saw him rising from his place in great glory. . . . His foes had cast him among mortals, who is the king of beings and the desire of nations. . . . May his slanderers be confounded!" (*Vêda* v. 2.)

This young queen, who is called "the lady of the people," is more often called by her vulgar name *aranî*, that is to say, the instrument of wood out of which comes fire by

friction. He who first discovered fire was Atharvan; according to the hymns, his name signifies fire itself. But he who made it into a sacred fire, by placing it on a sacred hearth and extracting bright flames from it, was Bhrigu. What he did is easily found out in the *Vêda*, and indicated by his own name; he poured over the wood on the hearth the melted butter, which was henceforth called the sacred unction (*añjana*).

Now in the physical theory of Agni, the fire which dwells in the unction comes from the milk of the cow, which itself comes from the plants eaten by the cow; and these plants grow by accumulating the fire of the sun: therefore the act of anointing must be ascribed to the heavenly father, the priest merely being the human instrument. In a metaphysical sense, the fire of life, which life also proceeds from the sun, manifests itself principally through power, learning, and wisdom, which must surely be eminently inherent in kings and priests. Sacerdotal unction and royal unction are symbolic ceremonies, by which the presence of Agni was shown to exist in a high degree within the anointed person. The priest inherited it from his father's hands; the king received it from the priest's hands, because on earth the priest was the representative and minister of Agni. Agni, who is the eternal priest, receives the eternal unction from the hand of the supreme God. Christ is therefore the anointed of the Lord.

Thus among men he who excels in power, wisdom, or goodness also deserves to be called the anointed of the Lord. This title was given to Cyrus the Âryan, at the time of the captivity, in the very midst of an Âryan community. Five hundred years later Jesus was declared eternal pontiff and supreme ruler, and consecrated by Divine unction. If we consider the great work accomplished by Him in the West, there is not one Brâhmin of good faith, nor a Parsee, nor of course a Christian, who could with any justification contest the titles applied to Jesus.

And, lastly, we find that, in accordance with the mystic fire transmitting itself from Christ to all believers, this name

has been given to them by several Fathers of the Church. We find them engraved in the catacombs, calling them *Christs* or Christians; for if baptism made with water, in which the candle and the anointing matter have been steeped, invests a man with the spiritual quality of a Christian, it is by unction on the forehead that this quality is confirmed, and man is marked with the sign of the cross.

This last word leads us back to symbolic figures and figured monuments, of which the cross is perhaps the most important. In its present shape we do not find it before the fifth century among monuments of Christian art; the T cross, which some aver to have been the instrument of torture in use at Jerusalem, is only to be met with once before that period, at the consular date of 370. But the paintings in the catacombs display a great number of crosses, some isolated, others standing amid a group of personages. These crosses are however different from ours in their very antiquity. Generally they are composed of two or three more or less irregular parts, whose extremities are swelled out like the notches in the stalks of many plants; again, it is a monogrammatical sign in branches, whose ends turn off at right angles  . A long border of these crotchety formed crosses runs round the celebrated pulpit of St. Ambrose at Milan.

Christian archæologists consider this to be the oldest form of the sign of the cross: so do I; for this sign is precisely the same as that traced on the forehead of young Buddhists and used by the Brâhmins of all times.[1] It is called *swastika*, which means the sign of salvation, because the *swasti* (in Greek εὖ ἐστί) was in India what the ceremony of *salvation* is with Christians. The origin of this sign is easy enough to detect now-a-days; it represents the two pieces of wood which composed the *aranî*, whose extremities were bent or swelled for the nailing down firmly with four nails. Where they were joined there was a little hollow; into that they placed a little lancet-shaped thing, which being quickly

[1] See my *Sanskrit Dictionary*, art. "Swastika."

whipped round produced Agni. Christian archæology is perfectly silent about the origin of the sign of the cross; but the *Vêda* and the theory of Agni reveal its primitive meaning.

This very same instrument is personified in the old Greek religion by the figure of Prometheus, the carrier of fire. That god is stretched like a cross on Caucasus, while the heavenly bird which is the *çyêna* of the hymns, each day devours his immortal breast. When Jesus was put to death by the Jews, this old Âryan symbol was easily applied to Him; and the *swastika*, after successive transformations, became the "hastated cross" of the Christian moderns.

The symbol of Christ's crucifixion was often represented by the lamb; the Abbé Martigny has written a short treatise on this subject, to which I refer my readers. It is astonishing to find this figure so often repeated in the Christian monuments of the early centuries, when it is notorious that Christianity had suppressed the immolation of the lamb; still more astonishing is it to see this symbol fallen into almost total disuse in the Greek Church, whilst the Latin Church preserves it. That the lamb represents Christ immolated is incontestable; but how can the Christian lamb, representing sacrifice, be used in so many circumstances of Christ's legend, when the notion of immolation is absent from them? How was it that several centuries elapsed before the lamb was even represented in connexion with the cross?

Since the theory of Agni is identical with the theory of Christ, and since there is so great a resemblance between the two legends, one naturally wonders whether the Latin Church would not have adopted the lamb symbol more readily but for this identity of names. This contemplation is singularly supported by the study of texts and figured monuments. There are texts which by themselves are nearly unintelligible, like this one, "*Corporis Agni margaritum ingens*" (*Fortunat.* xxv. 3), which reproduces a Sanskrit formula: "*Agni-kâya-mahâ-ratnam*, the great jewel of Agni's body." This principal jewel used to be put, in jewelled crosses, in that spot where the two branches

crossed, where in bare crosses we put an ardent sun, sending out golden rays in all directions; that is the spot from which sprang the first spell of the operation of *aranî*.

Sometimes too the lamb is shown on a hillock, down which run four streams, answering exactly to the four cups instituted by the Ribhus in the old Âryan sacrifice; or to the four priests, or to the four rivers of paradise. Indeed, according to the Abbé Martigny, that representation of the lamb is the oldest. Again, how is the golden zone to be accounted for which girds the lamb sometimes, unless we acknowledge it as the golden belt of the god Agni in the *Vêda?* And how can the epithet *agniferus*, given to the precursor, mean him who brings the lamb, when, on the contrary, he came to suppress his immolation, and was himself beheaded as the enemy of Jewish worship? Did that epithet not rather designate him who brings Agni? and did it not disclose in a new historic light the part assigned to John the Baptist?

Indeed, if the identification of the lamb and the divine fire at the outset of Christianity requires support, we need only turn to the theory as set forth in the Book of the Revelation: "And the (mystic) city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. xxi. 23). The early Christians symbolically represented the "light of Christ" by many varieties of lamps; the fourth volume of Perret's great work instances many curiosities of lamps. Martigny mentions one illustrated by De Lastérie, of which he gives a description. It was in the shape of a bird, from whose bowels there flowed a stream of oil; on his breast and head was the sign of the cross; on his head was perched a bird, the image of the Spirit, or of *çyêna*.

The symbol of the lamb was doubtless connected with the legend of St. Agnes. She was a little girl of twelve years, who suffered martyrdom, about the year 304, under Diocletian; though long unknown, she was, after a few years, honoured with a special worship in every church, and her

name was enrolled in the canon of the mass, where it still lives. After which the owner of this marvellously fortunate name was called upon repeatedly to fill the place usually occupied by Christ or by Mary His mother. She was sometimes, like them, placed between Peter and Paul, both of whom she exceeded in stature; sometimes between two trees, like the virgin; on lamps, on a hillock, like the lamb, like Christ, like the monogram; in her worship she was in close connexion with the lamb; and lastly, she alone, with Mary and John the Baptist, has two days set apart in the year, one for her nativity and one for her passion. These facts are all explained in the Fathers as a confusion between the words Agnes and Agnus; let us also add the word Agni, and complete the analogy. She was glorified in a vesture of gold, a necklet of pearls, and the jewelled tunic worn by queens, with flames about her feet in commemoration of her martyrdom, from which she rose unhurt; finally, her igneous and luminous nature is testified by a passage in the *Menologium*, which reads: "The impure (*ἄναγνοι*), by drawing Agnes into their gloomy dwelling, procured for themselves a dwelling of shining light." Christ's igneous and luminous nature is likewise set forth in a number of passages of the holy books, in the Fathers, and in the ritual as well as in figured monuments. Every one knows by heart the first chapter of the Gospel according to St. John, and these words of the creed, "Light of light." St. Jerome says of Christ "Something like unto fire and stars streamed from His eyes, and His Divine majesty shone from His countenance." In the Coptic Church, which possessed one of the oldest liturgies, the form of the blessing of the disk called the particles of the eucharist on the plate burning coals; the virgin, in the Alexandrian *Theotokia*, is qualified with "the censer which contained the living and true coals." The hymns of the eastern Churches often say that in the eucharistic bread mortals partake of the Divine fire.

As for paintings, there is not one authentic representation of Christ; the earliest date from the time of Constantine. During and after the second century a controversy

arose among the doctors, some maintaining that Christ was beautiful, others that He was ugly. Gregory of Nyssa, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, Chrysostom, and Theodorus vouched for His beauty; Justinus, Clement of Alexandria, and Cyrillus were equally sure of His ugliness. Irenæus affirms that the countenance of Jesus Christ is not known. It is a strange fact that this dissidence is also to be found among the precentors of the *Vêda*. Most of them praise the beauty of the resplendent Agni; others again call him *virûpa*, that is, deformed. The Homeric poems vary in the same manner with regard to Hephaistos (Vulcan); but after all both views are admissible.

Out of the theory of Christ and of His igneous nature there have arisen in the pictures of the catacombs numerous allegorical or legendary presentations, to which neither Christian archæology nor the Bible can give a key. The legend of the Magi is among the strangest. They are mentioned in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, but their number is not stated. Some paintings show three, some four, dressed in Persian hat and pantaloons. Sometimes the holy Child is alone, sometimes in his mother's lap. One of the bas-reliefs of St. Agnes' cemetery, and several other monuments, represent a person waving the fan in the shape of a little flag before the new-born child. This symbol cannot be supposed to suggest the two ordinary uses of a fan, the cooling of air or the driving away of flies, for the legend tells us that Christ was born in mid-winter; it is, in fact, purely Vêdic, as we have already seen. The theory of the Divine fire which dwells in the ministers of worship and pre-eminently in their chief, explains the reason why the pope has two large peacock feather fans borne before him during the services, notwithstanding that the rite of the *flabellum* has been abolished in the West.

Not wishing to weary the reader with any further details of Christian archæology, I will only cite two more facts, which are intimately allied to the secret doctrine of the Divine fire, showing how the early Christians depicted their own ideas by means of figures, a recurring one in the

catacombs being Jonah. He there appears in the three most important circumstances of his legend, when he is swallowed up by the monster, when he is vomited forth again, and when he is resting under the shrub. The Hebrew word which, in the book of Jonah, designates that shrub, has not a very clear meaning, but its arbitrary rendering is ivy or gourd. The paintings in the catacombs are generally very vague; among those collected in De Perret's work only two have recognisable features. Their fruit is neither that of the ivy nor of the gourd, but closely resembles the well-known fruit of the asclepias (swallow-wort); moreover the plant is a creeper, with long stems, which stamps it as an Asiatic asclepias. Now this is the very plant from which the Àryans were in the habit of obtaining the sacred juice of the *sôma*.

Again, Jonah is to be seen with the monster which swallowed him and threw him up again. That creature in no way resembles a whale nor any known animal; its form is wholly imaginary. Its tail is generally shaped like a leaf; its body rolls on the waters like clouds of smoke sending out tongues of fire. In one picture its head is entirely composed of these tongues, and has no teeth, no eyes, no nostrils; they open like two jaws, out of which Jonah is emitted in the full vigour of youth. Is not all this a faithful image of life and its inherent principle—the Divine fire? These underground paintings were neither more nor less than the figures of immortality; and we know that, according to Christian notions, the soul is closely connected with the mind, which is like a Divine incarnate fire dwelling in us.

Now, in conclusion, I will draw attention to a whole class of figured monuments, composed of three persons or of three symmetrically disposed symbols, a centre one borne up by one on either side. They abound in the catacombs and in Christian archæology museums. This trinity was a very popular one in the primitive Church, as is shown by good and bad drawings. By forming them into series, we should, on the one hand, find these personages successively

transforming themselves into linear figures or mystical diagrams; on the other hand, we should find them replaced by the natural thing they represent, and which is generally in itself a symbol. Thus, between St. Peter and St. Paul we see Christ, or His monogram, or the cross, or the lamb, or Agnes, or Mary, *Maria* or *Mara* as the case may be; she is often coupled with Agnes in this inscription: *Anemara*, *Annemara*, or *Agnemarâ* (in Sanskrit *agnimâyâ*). Christ and Mary are also replaced sometimes by a flaming vessel placed on a square stand; on either hand is a bird, each holding a branch, or they are perched on a line of perspective, which is the diagram. In many monuments these two birds bearing branches are replaced by two trees, divided either by a vessel containing the child, or by a woman with the names of Maria, Mara, or Agne. Sometimes all trace of human persons has disappeared; then Christ is replaced by a cross or an inscription with an ideographic symbol on either side. No doubt the early Christians in their own minds made a sort of connecting vein between all homologous signs depicted in the paintings, through which flowed but one conceptive idea; but this idea possessed a twin current, influencing the great Christian doctrine, the metaphysical and the physical at one and the same time. The cross, the names of Agnes and of Mary, the flaming vessel are accounted for by the double theory of Christ and the fire. So are the lateral figures by those pictures which recall Christ's birth or transfiguration; the passion scenes are not to be found on monuments before the fourth century.

The transfiguration is gorgeously set forth in the celebrated mosaic of St. Apollinaris *in classe* at Ravenna. In it a cross takes the place of Christ, having Moses and Elijah on either side; above it the hand of the heavenly Father; below, St. Apollinaris between two figurations, the one being a lamb, the other two lambs; at his feet, on two lines, twelve other lambs, which cannot be meant for the apostles, as three of them are already above. I will not attempt fully to interpret this great symbol, which is not quite

primitive, as it only dates from the sixth century; but I draw attention to Elijah and Moses, depicted there and at that time already mentioned in the gospels. No doubt can exist in our minds as to Elijah being there the representative of the sun, when we look around and find, in the East, all the temples of Helios on hill-tops turned into Christian chapels and dedicated to Elijah, and when we note the striking resemblance between Elijah's struggle with Satan and the natural struggle of sun against night. A bas-relief in the Lateran museum removes all doubt on this head. Elijah is seated in a heavenly chariot drawn by four horses; in Perret's cameo there are but two (iv. 26). There is also another interesting feature in the bas-relief at the Lateran, which is, that the nether part of the horses' feet appears to go off like lambs' feet. As for Moses, he is in many monuments of three symbols either represented by the moon, in different phases, or merely by the name *Luna*, having for a companion the Latin name of the sun, Sol instead of Helios. Why, will it be asked, does Moses play the part of moon in this legend? Well, the *Vêda* here gives us a most satisfactory answer. Not only is the transfiguration of Agni on the altar or on the hill between his "two great parents," whom he eclipses, as it were, often depicted in the hymns, but every one who enters into comparative philology will literally trace in the Latin name of Moses the Sanskrit name for the moon and month (*mâs*, *mâsa*). If upon that we care to look up in the book of the hymns everything bearing on the theory of those planets in connexion with fire, life, thought, and the holy sacrifice, we shall be brought face to face with all the above mentioned symbols. We shall likewise understand in those paintings in which, in the place of Helios and Moses, are depicted a horse and a hare, or else a ram and a peacock; the beautiful hymns of Dîrghatamas, on the celestial horse (*Dadhicrâs*) should also be perused; every Indian scholar knows the connexion between Indra and the ram, and the mystic link between the moon (*çaçin*) and the hare and peacock.

I will now desist from reconciling facts and incidents in eastern and western Christian symbols; their increasing numbers would simply tend to accumulate identities and analogues. What an instructive book could be compiled out of collected parallels of symbols! Such a study minutely executed would indeed blazon both Christian archæology and the origin of western worships. In what we have just set forth we only aimed at giving headings and a sketch which might eventually be worked out into a complete picture. We have said enough however to show that the resources of Christian archæology, pure and simple, do not reach very far, that they must be tracked to the East in order to discover their origins. The same efforts must be employed as when the successful investigations into the old religions of the West were instituted, religions which on reaching the *Vêda* at last found their original home and the records of their birth, for which they had groped in vain up till the early part of this century. From the facts we have just laid bare we also find out how inefficient the critical study of dogmas as taught by the German school still is.

The course of the dogmatic tradition having been traced back as far as the captivity of Babylon, enabled us clearly to see that the religion of Christ is Âryan, not Semitic. Beyond that epoch however, which is divided from our era by only five or six centuries, everything is gloom again. No doubt the Medo-Persian religion sufficiently accounts for the abstract theories of Christianity; but it explains neither rites nor symbols. It would be an error to suppose that its primitive form is that in which Zoroaster's *Avesta* transmitted it to us; every oriental scholar knows that in Iranian countries it opened a new phase of an old doctrine, as Brâhminism did in India. Nowhere but in the *Vêda* is this doctrine contained collectively and in all its parts. Now the *Vêda* itself is not primitive, for in it we find traces of older dogmas, represented by ruder symbols.

There is indeed no primordial religion on record, from which we might gather the desired information. All we see

is the transmission of one and the same theory, assuming different forms and creating new successive phases, which stand out upon the panorama of centuries as so many new religions. This theory is plainly shown in the sketch of comparisons we have just made. In our religion it is the theory of Christ; in the *Vèda*, it is the theory of Agni. If we take it just as the collection of Indian hymns gives it us, we can watch its development in the several religions containing it: in the East, in Brâhminism, then in Buddhism; in central Asia, in Zoroaster's religion; in Europe, in the mythologies of ancient Greek, Latin, and German races; and finally in Christianity, which has taken their place and partly absorbed them.

In order to understand how the rites and symbols of the *Vèda* could have been revived among the early Christians, one need not necessarily look to India as having directly influenced the nations on the Mediterranean; it was the common heritage of all Âryan races. We have however a good deal of conclusive evidence that this influence was exercised more than once. Not wishing to quote from our own time, I will only cite the recently discovered fact of a great Indian personage of the sixth century B.C. having been canonized. There is a work called *Baarlam and Josaphat*, which has been successively translated into Arabic, Armenian, Hebrew, Latin, French, Languedocian, Italian, German, Irish, Swedish, English, Spanish, Bohemian, Polish, and finally into Tagala, one of the Malayan languages. All these versions, which are comprised within a period of at least ten centuries, are taken from a Greek record attributed to John Damascene, who died in 760. That record, again, seems to all appearance to have been translated from or moulded upon a Syriac original, for all proper nouns in it are of this latter tongue. Moreover, as all the religions of that time are mentioned except that of Mohammed, it is conclusive that the Syriac book dates from before Mohammedanism. The principal character, Josaphat, is a king of India, converted to Christianity and instructed by a divine named Baarlam. The record says that this tale was brought from India,

that India is vast and populous, and that it is separated from Egypt by seas, bristling with numberless ships. The Latin version of this book, in the eleventh century, caused these two heroes to be canonized, the Roman martyrology prescribing November 27th as the day specially set aside for them. Now we are in possession of the original manuscript from which sprang all these versions: it is the *Lalita-Vistara*, which already existed in the third century B.C.; all the Sanskrit names were changed to Syriac names, and the hero of the book is none other than the Buddha Çâkyamouni.[1] I mention this case to show how, during the early centuries of the Christian era, Indian ideas penetrated into the West in the garb of strangers. We all know that this was the way of Greeks and Latins, who used simply to strip new acquisitions of their names. But Christians did not think it worth while even to use that pious and precautionary fraud: hence we have the entire worship of Orpheus embedded in Christian records.

According to a letter of St. Jerome to Marcella, Palestine in the fourth century was the centre where men from all parts of the world congregated, from Armenia, Persia, and India. A little while before, Eusebius tells us in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Christians were called barbarians, as belonging to a strange religion, from outlandish parts, *barbaræ ac peregrinæ*, which would however hardly apply to Judæa or to Egypt, both being part of the Roman empire. In the third century Tertullianus speaks of the Brâhmins and of the Indian ascetics, as being well known in his time.

At the end of the second century St. Hippolytus maintains that several heresies are moulded upon certain systems belonging to the Brâhmins of India, this being a proof that St. Hippolytus was cognisant of those systems. Shortly before, Meliton, bishop of Sardis, writing to Antoninus Pius

[1] See *Βαρλααμ καὶ Ἰοασαφ*, edited by Boissonade. *Baarlam and Josaphat*, French poem by Gui de Cambrai (13th century), with extracts from several other Roman versions, ed. Zotenberg and P. Mayer, Stuttgart, at the expense of the Literary Society, 1864, in 8vo, 419 pp.

in 170, said: "The doctrine which we profess first flourished with the barbarians; but eventually when, under the glorious reign of Augustus, it spread its roots in the nations under your dominion, it grew into a source of great blessing for your kingdom." At the time of Jesus Christ, the Jew Philon, who knew the Buddha, the Çramanas, and the Brâhmins, speaking of Alexandria and the whole south-east of the Mediterranean, wrote these solemn words: "There is a man here called the East."

In the *Journal Asiatique* M. Reinaud has given a treatise on the official relations between India and the Roman empire. It were most desirable for this highly interesting question to be again canvassed in all its branches, and that all unsolved facts be brought together from East and West.

We have reason to think that a great exchange of ideas was facilitated between India and the West by Alexandria, perhaps also by the Persian Gulf and by the caravans of central Asia, and that this intercourse began at a very remote period; for in the Third Book of Kings are to be found Sanskrit names designating things that were brought from the East for the building of Solomon's temple.

It will no doubt be a matter of surprise to learn that there is some Sanskrit in the catacombs of Rome, whilst there is but a single appearance of Hebrew. For instance, in the cemetery of Pretextat we find a curious and well known picture, given in the great work of Perret, which depicts the judgment of the two Christian women, Vibia and Alcestis. In the centre there is a tribunal, where two persons are seated. On their left hand are the two Christians, led along by Mercury the messenger; on their right hand are three erect and partly veiled women, called *fata divina*. Of the two judges seated on the judgment-seat, one is Diespiter, in the classic attitude of Jupiter Olympicus; the other is not Juno, but Abracura, a Sanskrit word meaning the divinity of the clouds, the queen of the heavens, wife of the Indian Jupiter.

Even from this random evidence we cannot help feeling that India must have exercised a direct influence upon the

Græco-Roman world. If the presence of the *asclepias acida* in the pictures of Jonah is admitted, we may well wonder how that symbol came all the way from Asia, where that sacred plant grows, while it is a perfect stranger to European flora. Was it brought by travellers returning from India, or by Indian missions, such as there were all over the world then? We cannot tell, for, as we now know, the primitive Church enforced the strictest secrecy; but we may rest assured that the fate of the book of *Baarlam and Josaphat* will overtake more than one work which up till now has been deemed original.

In this chapter I have endeavoured to throw some light upon one of the greatest and to this day the obscurest of histories, the problem of our religious origins. I have only drawn a few parallels, whose analogy cannot but strike the dullest observer. If these parallels which I drew roughly between Christian symbols and those to be found in the *Vêda* are not chimerical, we may consider the problem to be approaching its solution; and if that solution be the true one, we have been called upon to witness the gigantic growth of Christ's person and mission. I repeat emphatically once more, that the Divine majesty of Christ does not lose but gain intensity under these new lights and considerations. For if the Founder of Christianity is regarded as the embodiment, under the name of Christ, of a theory which existed before all history, Christ henceforth assumes in history a new and unexpected importance. The truth of His words, as given by the gospel, is forcibly brought home to us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am"; and henceforth the scattered religious unity of Âryan races is once more linked together. And if it be true, as many of our present scholars aver, that the traditions of Genesis are themselves only a sapling of the great Asiatic trunk, this re-established unity not only comprises Âryan peoples, but also Semites. The Greeks, the Latins, and the people of the north of Europe, having likewise obtained their ancient religions from the sources whence the *Vêda* sprang, are all connected with the entire

West by this theory. What is there outside the pale of this unity? Is it the extreme East? No; for Buddhism long ago converted it, and Buddhism likewise issued from India. Therefore the centre from which all great religions of the earth have radiated is the *theory* of *Agni*, of which Jesus Christ was the most perfect incarnation.

If the slow and laboured but sure process of science ends by confirming the views which we have set forth and which are partially confirmed, there will only remain one problem to be solved: Is the theory of Agni absolutely true? does religion tally with the data established by modern science? By-and-by we shall dissect this, the greatest and most contested of all questions, and my readers shall learn how much this question has already advanced towards solution, by means of the simultaneous development of the positive sciences as well as by our increasing knowledge of the East.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAW OF SUB-DIVISION.

THE general theory of religions may now be looked upon as perfectly definitive. The unity of historical origins is by this time familiar to us ; facts abound, and the philosophic data are plain and clear. Let us now in a few words enumerate the principal elements of this theory.

Motion, life, and thought, these are the three universal phenomena which our ancestors sought to explain. They commenced with motion, whose centre and principle they considered to be the sun. Fire or heat in its varied manifestations was to them the cosmical and earthly agent of the sun. Wind, that is to say, air in motion, was the condition without which these manifestations could not endure or even produce themselves. Accepting these three things as the universal agents, they identified them, and traced them to one single power, presented under three different aspects, and causing the innumerable multiplicity of motions on this earth. That this was the primordial doctrine we are convinced by studying the sacred books of India and Persia, the earliest form of this conception giving rise to the subsequent theory of the trinity.

When our ancestors began to consider the phenomena of life, they detected in them a variety of forms and aspects which wholly coincided with the variety of physical motions. Then from finding life inseparable from heat, they were naturally induced to identify those two things. As lesser cannot produce greater, they thereupon indued the first principles of motion with life, and made living beings out of the motive power and its three initial forms. The sun

was no longer a motor alone, he became the *heavenly father;* fire was called the *son*, and wind the *spirit*, whose breath enters into all living beings, and there maintains their life. It is the second form of trinity, of a psychological nature and co-ordaining all the surrounding vital phenomena of the universe.

The third form applies to the phenomena of the mind. This earth offers us minds of every degree, beginning with animals possessing the most rudimentary order, and culminating in man in the shape of general truths and absolute principles. Our ancestors, whoever they were who instituted religion, did not wonder, like some of our narrow-minded and prejudiced contemporaries, whether animals had souls; for what we call the soul is the manifestation of the mind's phenomena and consequently of life and heat. Now these phenomena are inherent in a greater or less degree with animals as well as with men. It therefore became evident that thought was dispensed over the universe proportionately with life and motion. They satisfied themselves that motion is evidenced by life, and likewise that life is evidenced by thought; and, again, the varied and changing forms of this latter they traced back to its centre of departure, the universal and absolute thought.

The god, who, in the first instance, was simply a shining being (*dêva*), was subsequently transformed into the principle of life (*asura*), and, in the third instance, also became thought in the highest sense of the term, that is to say, in its religious expression (*brahm*).

Our thoughtful men of the past made up their minds as to how it was possible for this unique and supreme god to be, according to his varied actions, father, son, and spirit—sun, fire, and wind. We need not here revive the endless discussions raised by this subject ever since the *Vêda* was written, and which are still far from being settled, though every stage of history has rekindled this vexed topic. If God has delivered the world over for human discussion, we have every reason for also including Him in it. Sects and heresies nearly all sprang from such barren disputes, which

over and over again compromised the very basis of doctrines and imperilled great religious systems.

What we should feel called upon to prove, as a fundamental principle of science, is, that religion is a metaphysical conception, a theory, a synthetic explanation of the visible and invisible universe. A theory would however not constitute a complete religion if it remained in a state of ideas and abstractions; a religion is such after the institution of its worship.

Now there is but one possible worship; the study of ancient records compared with existing religions proves that there never was but one. The fact is, that God, once conceived as a wise being, whose wisdom dictates the laws of earth, and whose action produces life and motion, man feels that his existence is anchored to this infinite being, that this being is his weaker and more impotent self. His sense of love, his gratitude for the "likeness" to God, is the first form of religion. The second is the ostensible means of manifesting faith. That means is sacrifice; that manifestation is worship. Worship was at one time a personal and domestic observance, kept in the bosom of his family by the father, who was surrounded by wife, children, and servants. Then it became public; families gathered around a common altar; the number of priests increased, churches were raised; and the resources of their united efforts enabled them to develop their worship, and to give it a lustre and pomp, to which domestic religion could never have attained. The facts I am thus gathering together for my readers are set forth fully and amply in the hymns of the *Vêda*. These Indian hymns date further back than any known books, even go so far as to give the names of the ancient initiators who transferred the domestic to the public worship; they call them *Ribhus*, whose name and legend answer literally to Orpheus.

So far however worship amounts only to the expressing of an idea, the symbol of a metaphysical theory. This theory and this symbol constitute the whole of religion, as

regards its essential parts; for these two elements of the sacred institutions are the only ones transmitted from century to century, from race to race, and which never fail to appear at every epoch, not only among the different branches of the Âryan race, but also among foreign, ancient, and modern races.

It is their common level, their indivisible heritage, the aliment of their past and present civilizations. Whoever will consider these facts in the light of philology or comparative study, whether he be a layman or priest, Jew or Christian, will be forced to admit that all Âryan religions of the past and the present come of the same stock, build upon the same theories, and practise the same worship. The theory was complete and worship was organized in all its fundamental, that is to say, symbolic and expressive forms, before the time at which the last Vêdic hymns in our possession were composed. Since then the primitive institution has not been added to, I might even say, has not been altered, by any religion. Our rites, which very few among us understand, our symbols, which have for the most part outlived their meaning, our legends, with all their local reality, are all to be found set forth in the *Vêda* in almost the same terms as those used by us.

We are therefore the dupes of an extensive and twofold illusion when, belonging to any particular Church, we entertain the hope of drawing men from other Churches within our own, wishing thereby to make them the units of a unity. First, this unity already exists in the fundamental doctrine and in the essential element of the worship, and therefore the attempt is superfluous; secondly, it would be like attempting to found a religion upon the very fact which causes the diversity of communions. A Protestant who wished to bring all men to Protestantism, a Catholic to Catholicism, an orthodox to orthodoxy, is under the same delusion as alchymists of former days, who tried to make gold from all metals; gold is a metal as regards those properties which are common to all other metals, but it is gold as regards its special attributes alone. Chemistry

only began its existence and became a useful science from the day it took things at their real value, and by giving up being chimerical it sought out, on the one hand, the homogeneous elements and the identical natures, and, on the other hand, the particular properties of bodies.

If the unity of religions consists in the identity of their metaphysics and their symbolism, no theory or practice will ever dislodge that unity; efforts which are intended to bear fruit will have to recognise and bring out in strong relief this primordial and everlasting unity.

Indeed, the more a man strains his energies to gain adherents for his Church, the more patent does he make the breach which separates him from their opinions; the antagonism among Churches is thereby fanned into fierce and yet fiercer flame, and the true, religious unity is hopelessly compromised. It is therefore equally important in practice as in science to find out the causes which have divided an originally single religion into so many individual opinions, separate Churches, and rival communities. This question has of late been minutely investigated by the comparative study of religions.

Before continuing, we must make ourselves clear about one thing, which is, that our present subject is in no way connected with morals, and that the conduct of life is an independent matter from this. We can prove with facility, by the sacred books of India, or by the ancient Greeks, or even by the books of Zoroaster—his oldest ones—that the aim of a religious institution was not to make men more or less virtuous, nor to impose any moral laws upon them: it was a pure and simple affirmation of a metaphysical theory formulated by our ancestors. It was only in the course of time that Churches assumed the right of inflicting rules of conduct and commandments upon their adherents. The most assuming in this respect was Buddhism, in which the metaphysical theory occupies the smallest space. After that came Christianity, especially in the form of Roman Catholicism. The most rigid code of morals is however enforced by the latest comer, Protestantism. Thereby we

see that morals quite gradually found their way into the different religions, and in such a way too that their complexion was always in harmony with the requirements of the times.

This cause of diversity has nothing to do essentially with religion, but rather with the strides of centuries. In the main, it is not religion, nor philosophy, nor science, nor even morals which cause customs; it is customs which create ages of morals, and which in their action upon the religious institution, as upon everything else, create the element of diversity. In itself religion is a stranger to morals, as may be seen by the books of the *Vêda*, in which religion exists in all its plenitude, and the moral prescriptions amount to nothing. If it were otherwise, every upright man would forthwith give up his religion; for there are no evil deeds, either public or private, that have not been committed in the name of religion, or for its advancement.

If the morals of a nation are produced by the existing customs, as has been proved to be the case, we must look to the social state of man for an explanation of the religious diversities. Hence we cannot expect that such and such a religion should be adopted by such and such a race, nor that it should suit any given epoch for the simple reason that its morals do not blend with the social condition of that race or of that time. The Greeks of former times, Indians, and Persians did many things which we condemn; we do things which are revolting to Musulmans. If, for instance, we only compare their manner of treating women with ours, we shall be forced to admit that that difference alone shuts out the possibility of introducing Roman Catholicism among them. To make this possible they would first have to change their manners and customs in this respect, and do as we do; but that very alteration in their customs would number them with the Catholics, and make preaching and converting superfluous. Slavery comes under this head too. Although the slaves of ancient Greece were as well treated as our present servants, they were still slaves, looking for protec-

tion to laws that were specially made for them. The Christian religion, which condemns slavery, could not have held its ground in Hellênic communities. The French School at Athens has lately discovered a great number of old inscriptions, in which the freedom of slaves was offered up as a tribute to some divinity. From that act we may date the altered condition which came over the customs of Greece, and which paved the way for Christianity under her emperors. Were it worth while to consult the history of humanity's customs, we should find that religion loses its universal nature, and amalgamates with one epoch and one particular people as soon as morals enter into its theories; but in the course of time the intellect of nations rises to the highest pinnacle or sinks to the lowest depths, and with this rise or fall new customs spring from the new social status—religion adapts herself to the new condition or sinks never to rise again. A case in point is the worships of Greece and Italy, which fell into rapid decay in the very height of civilization. The metaphysical doctrine, the immutable basis of religion, was there made the shuttlecock of the temples—the feather which was blown hither and thither: but only for a time; for men grew tired of this fatal system, and one by one deserted the temples of their faith.

Morals have their applications. Although in peripatetic theories, which are still held by some people, politics take their colouring from morals, I maintain that the political ideas of a nation have no connexion with existing customs, except in so far as they are each the outcome of the social status. Neither is religion in its germ any way connected with politics. Its standard is an altogether higher and loftier one, its primordial theory is altogether beyond any mutable political system. It is impossible to say what was the political condition of the Âryan race, from whose midst sprang the earliest religious institution; but according to the *Vêda* that condition must have been a very rudimentary one, for they were still in a divided state of feudalism long after the *Ribhus* had instituted the public worship; and

this condition had not been altered at the time of the first Hellenic migrations, as may be proved by all the traditions.

The old royal domains, that is to say, the feudal manors to which the old Indian hymns and the *Iliad* of Homer allude, were confined within such very small spaces, that their princes, who were independent one from the other, were practically surrounded by their families, servants, and farmers only. Just one step into the past shows us a simple condition—families with more or less possessions, whose only bond of community with their neighbours consisted in their being of the same race and religion, but unconnected by anything strictly political. But no sooner were they beginning to form into a political fraternity than religion and politics also mingled, and together fought the battles to which politics give rise. The legend in India of the king Viçwâmitra who turned Brâhmin, of Vasishta defending against him the temporal power of the priests, of the first Râma, who was on this field conquered by the second Râma, are the episodes of a thoughtless and fatal alliance between the religion and the politics of that time.[1]

Thenceforth Brâhminism adapted itself to the feudal condition of Indian congregations, thriving in their midst upon privileges and sloth; but as customs changed little by little, there came a time when a sort of revolution seemed inevitable. The equality of men in the eyes of religion and law became a subject of grave moment for a great many particular members of the community; the tendencies of Buddhistic preaching were for the dissolution of Church and State. Buddhism demanded from politics perfect neutrality: from morals the renouncing of earthly goods, and the practising of universal charity and fraternity. When we search into Buddhism as a religion, we are surprised to find how little light has been thrown on it by the oldest of the books containing it; but as a social reform

[1] For these legends, see the *Râmâyana*, i., Italian translation by Gorresio, and the *Bhâgavata Purâna*, French translation by Eugène Burnouf. See also Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, i.

and a political revolution, attacking the temporal power of the Brâhmins, Buddhism is one of the most gigantic and instructive human events.

Everybody knows also that at a very early date, at a time when Buddhism had not yet begun its existence, there sprang up an antagonism between the Indian religion and that of Iran—the two religions which shared one basis of doctrines, one worship, and whose proven identity is the fruit of the recent investigations into the books of India and Zoroaster. We must therefore conclude that the war which broke out between them had no religious cause, but sprang up under the influence of those centres to which the primordial doctrine had migrated. After investigating these centres by means of facts and authentic documents, one cannot fail to perceive that the feudal system introduced by the Âryans continued to exist in India, and eventually comprised and politically remoulded the Brâhmin caste, the proudest of all in dignities and privileges.

The Brâhmins maintained their mutual independence like the feudal kings before them—never appointed a supreme chief, and never mixed with those outside their caste, or sacerdotal colleges. The laws of Manu, which we possess, disclose a system so co-ordinate in all its parts, that it is impossible to say whether religion was there made for politics or whether politics were made for religion. Therefore Brâhminism is not a religion in the strictest sense of the word: it is a political institution into which religion was fused as an integral part; it is a primordial religion modified by a political element, and this element is the feudal principle. For India to be admitted into the great religious unity would require that Brâhminism be purged of its feudalism, that castes be abolished, kingships nullified, sacerdotalism open to all comers, and that the dominion of doctrine, worship, and symbols assume the aspect of three or four thousand years ago, before the conquest of India by the Âryans.

Another host of these latter had branched off to the south-east, and occupied that portion of Asia which extends from

the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. It met, fought, and conquered the great empires of Nineveh and Babylon; and probably it was during these struggles, and after their supremest abilities had been put to the test, that the Âyrans consolidated themselves politically into a sort of empire, and set up an almost absolute king, under whose blows fell the defenders of the old feudalism. The sculptured rocks on the Lake Vân bear witness of these deeds. Henceforth the religious chief became also the politic chief, and the whole empire of Cyrus, of Darius, and Xerxes was overspread with a monarchically organized sacerdotalism. At its head was a chief, and under him priests of different degrees; they instituted a doctrine by which the king was presented as a kind of incarnation or vicar of God on earth. This system was hostile to the Indians, because its fundamental doctrine, which was also theirs, had in their eyes the most odious political and sacerdotal system. The Medo-Persian system, enfeebled but not destroyed by Alexander the Great, prevailed until the Musulman invasion, after which its last representatives sought refuge in India, where they are still to be found. We might apply the same remarks to Magianism as to Brâhminism: it is not a religion, it is a political system. The *Avesta* contains the primordial religion only as divested of the monarchical elements infused by Medo-Persian politics. Among these elements we must include several which might in our eyes assume a religious nature, if we did not already possess in the *Vêda* the earlier and true condition of the common doctrine; in fact, just as the feudal system of India infused into the religion of the Brâhmins a strong tendency towards polytheism, so likewise did the monarchical principle of Persia induce the Magi to conceive God as a separate and individual being, a ruler over ministers and legions of angels of several degrees.

Christianity, coming five or six centuries after Buddha and Cyrus, caused the same revolution in the West as Buddhism in the East, only under different conditions. When we study dogmas, rites, Christian symbols, and compare them with those of the East, we are not so much surprised at their

resemblance as at their identity. A closer attention paid to these great religions will discover that the fundamental theory upon which they all are built was drawn from a common source. Have we not found that the theory of Christ, which existed long before Jesus, is Âryan and identical with that of Agni in the *Vêda?* The same may be said of the theory of God the Father, who is also Sûrya (the sun); of Brahmâ; and thirdly of the Holy Ghost, whom the most careless cannot fail to recognise in the Vâyu. Everything else pertaining to Christian metaphysics is also contained in the sacred book of the Indians, together with the rites, symbols, and the greater part of the legends admitted by Christianity. Moreover these common elements are also to be found in the *Avesta*, only perhaps more disguised than they are in the Vêdic hymns. Therefore we cannot reasonably doubt that Christianity is the Âryan religion itself, brought from Asia at the time of Augustus and Tiberius, whatever of course may have been the ways and means of its importation, promulgation, and vulgarization.

The worshippers of Ormuzd acknowledged it as soon as it dawned: and here the beautiful legend of the Magi who came to worship the new-born Child, and brought the same presents which they were in the habit of offering to Ahura-mazda, the foremost among their pure spirits, this legend is not without significance. The legend which tells of the massacre of the infants ordered by Herod is not without its bearing either. This king was an Idumæan Jew, whose object in ordering the massacre was to strangle the growing reform in its very birth. As for the empire, it took no notice of Christianity for a long time, nor umbrage at its abstract and non-political doctrines. There is no distinct mention of politics in the gospels, not even in the Acts or epistles. With the exception of the Gospel according to St. John, which came after all the others, there is no mention either of metaphysics in the New Testament, none but a few scattered and vague allusions to Christ's theory. Hence the gospels, even in conjunction with those called the Apocrypha, are quite insufficient for forming a

complete idea of primitive Christianity. They might almost be said to contain only the morals. They answer, as nearly as the difference of time and place will allow, to the Buddhist *sûtras*, books from different periods and varied value, which in their entirety only make up a third of the sacred writings in Buddhism. The other two parts of the Triple-collection (*Tripitaka*) comprise, as we know, the metaphysics and discipline. We may suppose that the earliest imitators of our religion possessed the foundation of Christian metaphysics, such as the Indo-Persian Orient furnished them with, and such as it was imparted to Paul, and also to more than one member of the early Church. This doctrine is implicitly contained in the oldest formulas of the ritual, several of which are anterior to Jesus even and to John the Baptist. The same theory applies with regard to the symbols; that is, the figured objects used at ceremonies, or those which have a mysterious meaning, only known to the initiated. Several of these symbols may be found in Rome, in the earliest catacombs; at that time already were they so divergent from their original forms, that we may be justified in considering them ancient. Now these very formulas and figures, which were known to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Judæa, are found again, with the same metaphysical meaning, in the books of the Indians and Persians. We can only suppose therefore that the ready made ideal doctrine, veiled in its symbolism, started on its way into the West across Syria, Galilee, and perhaps new Egypt. In our view this is, and was, the purely religious beginning of Christianity, or, in other words, its theoretic and universal basis. Everything else pertaining to the Christian or other institutions is of a later creation, and subject to later influences.

When this religion conquered the West, it had to contend against two advanced civilizations whose original antagonism had not then, and has not yet, subsided. The Greek world was then practically under Roman dominion; but the Hellenic spirit remained free throughout, for never yet has it allowed itself to be fettered.

The Greek fortresses were manned by Romans, the Greek military posts were held by Romans, the proconsuls, procurators, and inferior agents of administration were Romans; but with regard to each other the cities maintained their independence, their tongue, their schools, their temples, and their divinities. Every man freely followed his calling; there was, in fact, felt to be more safety as regards transactions and traffic than in the balmiest days of liberty. So when Christianity was embraced by the Hellênes it had to conform to the local life of these autonomous cities. Its Churches began to form small centres, with distinct administrations, simpler in nature, but certainly the stronger, for directing their energies to matters purely religious and not political.

The division of the Roman empire and the installation of a second emperor at Constantinople made no notable change in the organization of Hellenic Christianity. That organization had been firmly established before the division came about, and we know that it is the nature of religions, more than of any other human institutions, to preserve their early form. Notwithstanding the ecclesiastical intrigues which were more than once enacted in the eastern capital, the Greek Church never violated that policy of patriarchal singleness, which is also the policy of precedence, and which never allows any particular Church to succumb to the autocracy of any other. This state of things still exists, greatly to the advantage of orthodox populations. It is therefore a strange illusion of the western world to suppose that there is a powerful religious bond between the Greeks and Russians, and that the minds of the South-east are subjecting themselves to Greece. The Hellênes however know better; they realize daily that were their Church to place itself under the protectorship of Petersburg, they would experience in the czar, the head of the northern religion, a sovereign pontiff a hundred times more to be dreaded than the pope of the Latins. The czar's power is on the increase, and the pope's on the decrease. In Russia, the Church is the political instrument

par excellence; religion there is practically a mixture of politics, superstition, and fanaticism: whilst the Greek bishoprics are, from their mutual independence, the very type of Brâhmin communities, or as nearly so as the difference of nation and civilization will permit. Of all branches of Christianity this is the most approximate to the primitive religion of the Âryans, as it is the one most exempt from an admixture of strange and disturbing elements. In the West, Christianity was met by a very differently organized state of politics. The successive conquests of Rome, the reforms brought about by the republic, the extension of city rights which continued under the emperors, had given, not alone to Italy, but to the entire Latin world, a political unity unexampled in the West. The founding of the empire finally consummated this unity. The emperor was the pivot upon which the surrounding public powers turned; justice itself was administered in his name, and his authority weighed upon every detail of the citizen's life. The newly imported religion contained no preconceived political doctrines, and was therefore open to the first that presented themselves. Every new ecclesiastical centre of the West placed itself under the Church of Rome, whose bishops subsequently became the chief of what was called Catholicism. We must say however that this term, which the Church of Rome appropriated to herself, is not quite correct if we compare it with the reality of facts; for she never gathered all Christian Churches into one, and moreover in moulding her hierarchy upon that of the empire, she admitted an element into her constitution which cost her her universality.

History has proved in past and present that this element is of a political nature, without a single religious attribute. Indeed, when the so-called barbarous nations, mostly of the Âryan race, had invaded the West, dismembered the empire, and founded new kingdoms, the greatest moral power left standing in Europe was the clergy. When a certain prince recently undertook to reconstitute the empire he found his sole support to be the Church, in recognition

of which he was induced to grant many secular concessions and an unlimited temporal power to her pope; though he took upon himself the responsibilities of a ruler, he acknowledged above him the master for whom he acted as vicar and defender-at-arms. But the capitulation did not end here. The royal power thus subordinated to the Church's head entailed with it the submission of royal actions to the pope's approval; the authority of the Church took precedence over civil law and constitution; the pope suspended kings by excommunication and exercised rights which bordered on absolutism. Practically lay communities ceased to have their being; their places were being usurped by vast ecclesiastical communities framed on the Roman empire and on the system of castes, and produced in Europe something similar to the Persia of Darius.

I need not here rehearse the voluminous history of the popes and their power. It is well known how sure and unremittent was their decline, which both the resistance of kings and the reaction of the Germanic spirit, called the Reformation, brought about. This two-headed vigour is not yet spent. On the one hand, we see the pope defending inch by inch, yea, with the aid of arms and the price of gold, the last shreds of his imperial power; on the other hand, the lay spirit, strengthened by science and instructed by so many discoveries, carries on the work of reformation, and gradually reduces the authority of Rome's pontiff to its original state. Europe sometimes wearies with a struggle that seems fruitless, and whose issue cannot altogether be determined; but we must be patient, and trace out, as they say in mathematics, the curve of the Church's secular power, and convince ourselves that the laws of nature work in curves, and that they are invincible. The *non possumus* is not a force, it is sluggishness and an avowal of incapacity. The living force in modern communities is science, which, if armed with a steady purpose, can take all things back to their own realms of original freedom.

From what has just been said we find that Christianity, considered in the various forms of its Churches, presents

two perfectly distinguishable elements. In its common attribute, that is, in its metaphysics, its fundamental rites, and its early symbols, Christianity is the universal religion imported from Asia, causing by its attributes a confusion between it and the ancient religions of the Âryan nations; but the sacerdotal hierarchies, which more or less resemble monarchies, as presented both in Europe and the New World, are political institutions. They have nothing in common with the spirit of impartiality which prompts religion. The dissolution or transformation of these hierarchies is a secular event of no interest to religion. Religion would indeed be compromised if an event of that description could bring about in her new metaphysics and an attendant train of novel rites and symbols; but considering that religion has found it possible to preserve her elements intact and unimpaired whilst adapting herself to the most multifarious political states, and quickening each in their turn, the large civilizations of India, Persia, ancient and modern Greece, Latin, Germanic, imperial, feudal, royal, and republican Europe, we may without misgiving expect these her elements to rise above any new changes that may be coming about.

We perfectly understand the perseverance with which the Roman Church, assailed on all sides by the rising spirit, defends what she considers her rights, and proclaims them in Italy, in Austria, in Spain, in France, and even in England. It is in the nature of a living being to give evidence of life until the very last. But with the conviction of every honestly religious mind that the Roman Church is a fast decaying political institution, we cannot reconcile the fact that her power and prerogative are more durable than those of czar, sultan, or other contemporary potentate.

The wish has often been expressed by sincerely religious men to found one universal and comprehensive Church. Theoretically, nothing is easier to conceive than such a Church; but those who would entrust its formation to a council cannot have given the matter serious thought. We know that this Church does exist at the bottom of all

religions; but never will it rise to the light of day till its surface has been cleared of that choking disorder of political, hierarchical, secular agencies—that seething, fermenting, conflicting ocean, in whose depths lies the one and only anchor of true religion. But we cannot in this case expect nature to step out of her accustomed course and work a change in conditions that have taken so long to prepare. Both human and natural events rise from nothing, grow, grow to their fullest dimensions, and as gradually return to nothingness. The surest and only possible course to follow would be the one I pointed out in the preceding pages: the political shoots that have one by one sprung out of every religion would have to be removed as gradually as they came. If the expediency of this proposition could only be impressed upon every community, the Western world would soon be neither Catholic, Greek, Russian, nor Protestant: it would be Christian. And if this theory were further applied by other Âryan nations in Asia, our entire race would no longer be Brâhmin, Buddhist, Mazdean, nor Christian: it would be simply religious. Alas! we see but too plainly how distant such a fate is from us. Placing our hopes upon priests for their co-operation is as vain as the calling together a council of kings for the establishment of a universal republic: nations might conform—but kings, never.

It is supposed by some people that it is in the interest of religion to preserve the Roman hierarchy. But that is a mistaken idea, for Roman Catholicism is a political not a religious institution. If the preservation of such hierarchies were really absolutely necessary, the necessity would be felt in every country's religion. This point being accepted, we cannot hesitate in admitting that the law which dictates a return to unity would be impracticable, that it is no law, and that universal religion, so far from effecting a return to its primordial catholicity, tends, on the contrary, towards its own absorption and that of human kind.

There is no doubt that Christianity, after the original singleness of its religion, divided itself into two great

Churches, not counting two or three collateral communities, and that by-and-by these Churches again subdivided. The number of Christian sects now-a-days is very great: every country, however small, has a Church more or less appropriate to its social and political condition. It seems therefore that the element of diversity in the Christian religion grew and grew until it reached its present dimensions. Even we have witnessed the birth of new sects. At this moment the Catholics of France are divided, not about general doctrines, which are always outside the pale of discussion, but on questions of hierarchy and clerical administration, that is to say, on political questions. If it be true that the fundamental religion was originally an undivided one, we may as well admit that the law which urges Christianity to ever-increasing divisions is the same as that which divided the primitive institutions into several branches, and raised from one seed the Indian, Persian, Greek, Latin, and different western religions, and later on Buddhism in Asia and Christianity in the West. This law has worked now uninterruptedly for many thousands of years, and applied equally to the several religions of every country and clime. Not only the old Hellenic and Latin religions presented an extreme diversity of small priestly colleges and petty communities, devoid of all clerical concord, but Buddhism, comparatively modern though it be, has a multiplicity of Churches in Asia, like our Christian communities. There is a kind of pope in central Asia who gives it a semblance of hierarchic unity; but Siam, Pegu, Ceylon, the Pacific Islands, a portion of China, all have Buddhist Churches as independent of that pontiff as the Churches of Germany, of England, and of the United States are of the pontiff of Rome. The learned investigations into this subject made by European scholars or by Europeans who have travelled and lived in the East, from Father Huc to Bishop Pallegoix and the reverend Bigandet, all attest to this division in the great Buddhist community.

If we could string together the facts and ideas from the *Vêda* and the Ribhus till now, we should have the practical

display of a law which enforces upon the universal religion a process of divisions which will go on multiplying, no one knows for how long yet. Now assuming this law to be in course of process—that Italy, for instance, strike out a new, independent course, and that other countries like France and Austria are driven to do the same thing in consequence of unbearable oppression or opposition,—what would ensue? Why, nothing less than the breaking into more fragments of the Catholic institution and the founding of new Churches in countries where Catholic unison seems to be fast rooted at this present moment.

Let us carry the application of this law still further: whenever a new rupture takes place, each community numbers fewer adherents than the body from which it divided itself; and after many such repetitions there is the religion of one solitary individual. Such are the causes that brought about the fall of polytheism; and each adherent that fell away entered into the bosom of the Christian religion. At that time our religion had not yet contracted any definite alliance with politics; it was undivided; it was justified in calling itself universal or catholic.

And if finally such a phenomenon were produced in the East as in the West, we should find the sectarists of the different Asiatic communities forming themselves into smaller and smaller groups, until there would be no two members together, but each single one would join the universal religion we spoke of. Now such a movement has been going on in India for some years; it is gradually gaining ground with enlightened Brâhmin society. One of its chiefs was in Europe known by the name of Rammohun Roy; he set himself the task of pointing out the way to a desired goal, which is the going back to the single doctrine of the *Vêda*, and the giving up of polytheistic worships which still swarm in India.

We see now that the aim and end of the *law of indefinite subdivision* is universal unity in religion. This unity was broken up by the fusion of a political element with the religious institution; but this very element will in time

work its own subversion. Those communities which are founded upon a hierarchy, and which form into civil societies, cultivate in their very midst the germs of their own destruction. No army, no alliance, no human succour of any kind can turn the tide of this self-destruction, against the irresistible laws of nature.

What benefit, may we ask, has papacy derived, for instance, from the military support granted by the imperial government, from the raising of motley troops of ten or twelve thousand strangers? None, not even the addition of one new partisan, only the alienation of numbers of men, especially in Italy; and to-day Papacy is much weaker than it was fifteen years ago. On the other hand, Roman, or rather Catholic, politics are so opposite to the most accepted and solid of our legislations, that every attempt to support them reflects detrimentally and stirs indifference into open enmity. I repeat it, the Roman Church nurses in her the germ of her own destruction, and herself invites the fulfilment of the moral law. Yet, whatever be the doom of the various sacerdotal systems, extinction will never be the fate of the foundation of religion; it is ideal, not earthly. Truly Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." The truth of religion will live for ever, for it is the faithful reflection, or rather the spontaneous emanation, of nature's phenomena and nature's laws.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ACTION OF RACES.

THE ideas we have just set forth, the drawing up of facts known to every one, and of others which contemporary science discovers daily, only apply to Âryan communities. One and all derive their origin from central Asia. IN many countries, and perhaps wherever they settled down, they called themselves Âryans. The oldest monument of the race, the *Vêda*, is that in which the word Âryans most often occurs. From the habit of seeing it so repeatedly, science has given up using the terms Indo-Germanic and Indo-European, which are still used for designating the family of Âryan races. In order that we may profitably follow up the application of the laws so lately set forth, we must take up the thread as near as possible to the cradle of this race. Starting with the *Vêda* as a book, and with the valleys of the Oxus as a geographical centre, let us perfectly realize the religious unity of the ancient races, then of the modern nations of the Âryan race; and step by step in the progress of their individual histories we shall learn to distinguish and separate the foreign elements from the primitive doctrine, those elements which caused the subsequent apparent diversity among religions. This study could be easily accomplished if the doctrine of our ancestors had confined itself to their race. But here comes the difficulty. Nearly every race that came into contact with an Âryan nation borrowed from this latter more or less of the doctrines, and therewith founded or improved their own institutions.

When, in the reign of Louis XIV., the yellow men from the peninsula beyond the Ganges first sprang into notice, it was generally believed that their religion was rather a

barbarous and a ridiculous one. But later it was found that the famous Samanacodom spoken of in the poem of Louis Racine was none other than the Çramana-Gautama of the Indians, that is to say, Buddha. Only in our days it was discovered at what period and how Buddhism, the Âryan religion, had descended to this inferior race of people through Indian missionaries; how they were humanized, civilized, and transformed into a human society, which, in a higher degree perhaps than all others, practises toleration. When we compare the Buddhism of Siam with that of the oldest *sûtras* of Nepaul, which are like the gospels of that religion, we soon come to the conviction that the metaphysical part of the doctrine has almost disappeared from their teachings, that the people of the peninsula have substituted a conglomeration of superstitions and coarse practices; that the authority which the early missionaries arrogated to themselves and transmitted to their successors eventually increased the numbers of priests and convents in a frightful proportion. Their priesthood, like that of Rome, moulded itself upon the political constitution of the country; and the entire clergy now orders itself to a pontiff that ranks with the king, reigns side by side with him, and himself assumes the title of king.

It took a long time to discover too that the religion of many Chinese was of foreign importation, and that Fô is the monosyllabic Chinese form of Buddha's name. By means of translated accounts of Chinese travel, more especially Stanislas Julien's rendering of *Hiouen Thsang*, we have been afforded an excellent view of the worship of Fô; we have been enabled to compare it with the Buddhism of our days and with the primitive Buddhism, such as we find it in the *sûtras* of Nepaul. We have seen how the Chinese element transformed the doctrine of the Buddha. Like many scholars, who are sceptical philosophers and materialists, the votaries of Fô, ignorant of the lofty metaphysics of Çâkyamuni, substituted for it idolatrous worships, of which the most popular is that of an ideal woman, Mâyâ, the mother of Buddha.

The decrease of the primordial theory, which is at the base of all religions, did not come about in a less degree in Tibet than in the centres of other yellow races. Read Father Huc's oriental documents, and especially those which Foucaux has translated, and you will soon see that Tibetian Buddhism is very different from that of the Indians in the reign of king Açôka or of Chandragupta, the Âryan diplomatic ally of Seleucus Nicator. We might persist in the enumeration, and draw up in review, from Ceylon to Japan, all the nations of foreign race which adopted Buddhist institutions ; science however has discovered the fact, that with these peoples, not only the practical portion of that religion has suffered decay, but also the metaphysical theory, which everywhere made way for anthropomorphism, the belief in spirits, and other superstitions. If we care to unravel the cause which produced this decay of one of the greatest religions, we must not consult religion itself nor the peculiar institutions of each of the yellow or black races; the cause lies in the difference of races. China possesses moralists and practical philosophers, but not one metaphysician; many experimental arts and trades, but no science. Our expedition of a few years ago sought in vain for a Chinese mathematician in Pekin, but found only a vast company of calculators. The general notions of an abstract nature are quite foreign to that race of men who lack the requisite part of the brain. Hence the metaphysical theory which is the essence of religion is also quite foreign to them, and it would be as useless to try and teach it to them as to turn a lion into a lamb, and to alter the law of generation.

Shall we speak of the black nations, inferior to the yellow races, which since time immemorial have occupied the south of Asia and a great part of Africa? Need we inquire as to what are the greatest religions now-a-days of those countries ? The English who have been to Abyssinia will tell us how the subjects of Theodore treated Christianity, and what became of, I will not say God the Father, whom their minds never conceived or adopted, but of Jesus and

Mary, the apostles, the saints, the ceremonials of mass, and the sacraments. Before Christianity entered into Abyssinia, the black races in the neighbourhood of Upper Egypt had already received missionaries from Asia and been converted. In the Greek language there is a document, long since celebrated and translated into several languages, whose value however was not discovered until our days, for the reason that India and Persia had till then remained unexplored. The book meant is the *Ethiopica* of Heliodorus. It is, in fact, an episode from the history of civilization in Ethiopia. In that book we are made acquainted with a black nation whose king and queen had Persian names, and whose spiritual leader was a priest named *Sucimitra*, a Sanskrit name meaning "the friend of the pure." The religion of this Asiatic missionary was already powerful in Ethiopia at a time when bloody sacrifices, ay, even human sacrifices, as in Dahomey now, were still being held. But towards the end of the book these customs disappear, and the gentleness of Âryan usages triumphs; it does not say however whether these people were aware of the metaphysical doctrines upon which this moral is founded. Each race of men deduced from religion what it could and according to its capabilities: one took metaphysics with its own sublime rites and symbols, and called by Jesus the "sons of light"; others again took meaningless anthropomorphism, the figures of sacred animals, and the sacerdotal allegories; and another race adopted barbarous superstitions and worships. There are to this day enough representatives of the base races on earth, uninfluenced by any of the superior religions, to enable us to judge of what they are capable. They are to be found in Africa and in the New World. The room of the Gospel Mission in the exhibition of 1867 gave a collection of precious specimens of their divinities; but it also showed some symbolic gods of Âryan origin, that had been transformed by the coloured men of southern Asia and the Pacific Islands. The untiring authors of that collection ought to have assigned a place

to the sacred figures of Christianity, collected out of those same races. No harm would have been done to religion, and much good to science.

We have learnt enough from books and travels now to be able to say positively, that every religion which is conveyed into the midst of an inferior race must there undergo decay; that its influence upon the people is limited; on account of their limited mental powers all higher attributes float above and beyond their understanding. Experience has taught us that human races influence each other morally and physically in a superficial and transient degree only, the effect of which soon disappears when the cause of that effect is exhausted.

Among these races there is one which has played an important part in the world's religious history, the foremost, in fact, among Âryan races: I mean the Semites. Those scholars who have studied anthropology almost all agree in placing the Semites between the Âryans and the yellow peoples: not that their distinctive traits betoken a medium condition between those of our race and those of eastern Asiatics; but notwithstanding their being far superior to the yellow races, they betray with regard to us such disparities as to prevent their being confounded with Indo-Europeans. A real Semite has smooth hair with curly ends, a strongly hooked nose, fleshy, projecting lips, massive extremities, thin calves and flat feet. And what is more, he belongs to the occipital races; that is to say, those whose hinder part of the head is more developed than the front. His growth is very rapid, and at fifteen or sixteen it is over. At that age the divisions of his skull which contained the organs of intelligence are already joined, and in some cases even perfectly welded together. From that period the growth of the brain is arrested. In the Âryan races this phenomenon, or anything like it, never occurs, at any time of life, certainly not with people of normal development. The internal organ is permitted to continue its evolution and transformations up till the very last day of life by means of the never-changing flexibility of the skull

bones. When in the latter years of life our cerebral functions get out of order, this derangement is not due to the external conformation of the head, but in all probability to the ossification of the arteries.

To these facts of a purely physiological nature we must add another as important, since it also comes under the law which presides over the physical and moral development of the human races. At the age of fifteen or sixteen, a Semite is full grown, and his intelligence has reached its greatest extent. From that time forth the youth makes no progress, and until the end of his days his intellectual life must needs feed upon that primitive stock, to which he can add nothing more. In Egypt, in Palestine, on the coasts of the Red Sea, and elsewhere, there are men, properly constituted, whose intellectual development comes to a standstill before the age of ten. During the winter of 1868, I had an opportunity of noticing this fact in all the larger schools of the Mediterranean Levant. At Cairo, in a magnificent establishment founded at the expense of the viceroy, a Christian brotherhood teach Musulmans, Greeks, Jews, and Catholics. The Arab scholars rank in intelligence above the Franks, but soon they lose their place in the class. At Beyrout, where there are children of many races, the masters notice that progress among the Semites, which is very rapid during the first years, ceases at the age of eight, after which age the scholars learn nothing more. Similar facts have been observed at Alexandria among the brotherhood, at Ghazir among the Jesuits, at Antoura among the Lazarites, at Jerusalem, at Aleppo, at Smyrna, and in many other institutions. At the Isthmus of Suez, the long duration of the work gave the young Semite workmen a chance of making themselves familiar with the engineering of the canal, a few of the cleverest even obtained the posts of overseers; but since, after attaining the age of manhood, they have neither acquired new knowledge nor extended that which they possessed, these otherwise excellent foremen are quite at a loss when called upon to repair the machinery in their care, or to find out where the mischief lies. They

are forced to appeal to European workmen under them. They are like the scholars of Ghazir.

There are natural laws then in the human races which preside over the moral and physical development of individuals, decreeing that one should be hemmed in by fatal limits, whilst others have the sole glory of a limitless future in store.

Jews do not all belong to the Semite race. De Bunsen, has, throughout the whole Bible, pointed to a co-existence of two races of men, one black, the other of a dark colour. These two families still exist; they are traceable in all eastern countries where there are Israelites. Even in Europe, where the civic laws have facilitated the mixing of races, the distinction is still possible. I know a large town in the east of France where the Israelites number about four or five thousand: some among them bear all the traces and features of the children of Idumæa, whilst others are scarcely distinguishable from Christians.

The aptitudes of races play as important a part in the history of religion in the West as in the East. There is no visible reason why the current of ideas which produced Christianity should have been exempt from the law of races, any more than was the case with the Indian current. If the primordial doctrine, in its passage through the valleys of the Ganges, after leaving the valleys of the Indus, had there met with Âryan races only, it would not in that region have engendered Brâhminism, which is based on the system of castes, nor certainly Buddhism, which invited the lowest races of coloured men to share the Brâhmin privileges. In the same way, if the Græco-Roman world in the reign of Augustus had produced no conquerors and conquered, no masters and slaves, in fact, no diversity of races in the empire and especially in the Levant countries,—had Europe and Asia, in fact, been solely inhabited by Âryans equal among themselves, there would have been no reason for preaching Christianity and for impressing upon society that the kingdom of heaven is open to all men.

We are to-day in a position to point out which were the different parts played by the different races not alone in the formation, but also in the originating of Christianity. The method we follow is at once historical and analytical.

It is by means of the comparative study of symbols, rites, and doctrines that we succeed in finding out the true relations of religions to each other; it is by observation and analysis that we become acquainted with races and their aptitudes; it is by history we discover what was their contact and the influence they exercised, how, at the very time when observation tells us that the Jewish people consist of two distinct races, historical criticism applied to the Bible reveals to us these two races at enmity with each other since the remotest times. The bulk of the Israelite nation was Semitic, and adhered to the worship of Elohim, personified in Abel. The rest, which were always in the minority, were like strangers from Asia, practising the worship of Jehovah. They were probably Âryans; their headquarters were taken up north of Jerusalem, in Galilee. The people of that country again form a striking contrast to those of the south; they resemble Poles. It is they who infused, partly at least, into the worship of the Hebrews, all that there is of symbolism, and into the earlier books of the Bible all there is to be found of a metaphysical nature. To their race generally belonged the prophets, from Melchizedek until the captivity of Babylon; to that race must also be attributed the religious tone, such as it is, pervading the songs said to be written by David; also the invectives of the prophets against this "hard-hearted" people, whose natural inaptitude for lofty doctrines and perpetual relapses into idolatry roused their indignation. Upon this old stock, now known to have been of Âryan origin, the people who had been at Babylon founded, not only more explicit doctrines, but an entire sacerdotal and political system, borrowed from the Persians of Cyrus and Darius. Recent investigations have placed these things beyond a doubt. We must however not overlook the fact that there is an element in the Bible foreign to Âryans, for it is not met

with in the books of Zoroaster nor in Brâhminism, nor in the *Vêda:* it is the person of God. Although the problem of the Divine nature is not entirely solved in the Vêdic hymns, several of them have a strong tendency to pantheism. This pantheism established itself in India as a fundamental theory at the same time as the Brâhmin constitution, and has ever since been the religious doctrine of the Indians. We know that the highest divinity of Persia was, and has continued to be, Ormuzd, who was the Asura of primitive times, and who in the heavenly hierarchy of Zoroaster was the first among the *amschaspands;* but above and beyond this personal and living god, supreme agent in creation and ruler of the world, the Magi, like the Brâhmins, conceived the absolute and impersonal being, into whose unity all living beings, and Ormuzd himself, are merged. There is therefore no essential difference between the metaphysics of the Persians and of the Indians.

Our modern scholars who have studied Semites, and among them Renan, an authority on these matters, have shown, on the contrary, that Semitism is based on the Divine personality, this being the very cause of its divergence from Âryan dogmas. We must therefore recognise in this manner of conceiving God an element which the race itself introduced into the doctrine. This element is visible from the beginning of the Bible; it served as support to the entire political system of the Israelites. Had the prophets combated its influence, and preserved the Âryan doctrine in its integrity, it is probable that they would have acted in a very small degree only on the Jewish race, whose Semitic majority would have remained perfectly ignorant of so exalted a metaphysic. The cerebral and intellectual development of a Semite ceases before he has reached the age at which man is able to grasp such transcendent speculations. Only an Âryan can attain unto such understanding; the history of religions and of philosophies shows us that the Âryan alone raised himself to that altitude. That which a young Idumæan cannot grasp, he will not teach his son; the inaptitude of the race will be

perpetuated through generations; and their god will always possess, whatever his distance from the earth, the attributes of a great man, of a powerful prince, of a king of the desert.

Judaism, taken from the book of Moses or from the prophets, cannot be looked upon as representing the thought of Semites in its entire purity, for its origin is in a great part Âryan. On the other hand, the doctrine of the Koran is not exclusively Semitic either, since the author of that book was influenced by both Judaism and Christianity. Since however we know that no race ever takes from another anything unsuited to its capabilities, we have only to sift the truly Semitic attributes from the Koran, and the remainder will be the result of Mohammedan influence and contribution. Now the whole of their religious metaphysics is contained in their idea of Allah, who is the Elohim of the Bible, as Ormuzd is the Asura of the *Vêda*. This Allah is not a cosmical unity; he is a powerful person that dwells beyond the earth, and governs it according to his absolute, arbitrary, unalterable, and irresponsible will; his justice is his whim; the ordering of things is the work of his passion, which is sovereign and irresistible. Men tremble before him and crave his pity, not as the reward of their virtues, but as the price of their submission. This monarch, whose seat is amidst heaven's solitude, is an eternal sultan, who once on a time relinquished the exercise of power over the whole earth into the hands of his prophet. His authority, which was vested in one particular family, was intended for transmission to its descendants, as in the desert the authority vested in the chosen chief of a tribe is handed down to his heirs. Thus do the Semite Musulmans conceive their god. We see how poor in metaphysics is this stock of doctrines, how inferior this Allah is to the Jehovah of the sons of Israel, even though this Jehovah is only the Âryan idea in a cramped and stunted form.

The part enacted by Galilee and by Syria in the early days of Christianity; the short space of time which Jesus

spent in Jerusalem; the confusion which long after prevailed among His followers; above all, the primitive rites, the symbols, as we find them figured in the catacombs; and, lastly, the common doctrines of Christianity,—all join together in proving that the religion of Christ was not derived from the Semites, but that the "ancient law" contained a portion of the Âryan doctrines which Jesus came, "not to destroy, but to fulfil." Protestants consider it a vital point to know whether the complement of the doctrine was imparted to the pagans through the immediate disciples or through Paul. This problem may interest the Reformed and in a measure the Catholic Church, but it does not concern the Christian religion taken in its unity. The real matter at issue is whether this religion proceeded from Judaism or not; now-a-days this may be looked upon as settled. The more or less modified Mosaic doctrines of Israel only suited people of mixed races whose capital was Jerusalem; it had not the universality which characterizes a common religion, nor the transcendent metaphysics demanded by the Âryan genius. This is why, when the new religion was first preached, its earliest enemies were the Semites of Judæa; they killed Jesus, whilst the Greeks and a few Israelites of the Hellenic countries adopted His faith and raised the first Churches.

When, with a perfectly unprejudiced mind, we begin to study the written or figured monuments of Christianity, we soon perceive that the metaphysics they disclose have much more in common with that of Persia and India than with the doctrine of the Semites, and that it is identical with that of the *Vêda*. We do not find the nature of God declared in a dogmatic and definite manner in that work; but it assimilates Christ with the common principle of life and thought to such a degree, that in the catacombs we may often see the souls of the dead called Christs, and that in the Gospel according to St. John Christ is identified with life, light, and reason. The number and varieties of heresies, which were for the most part the opinions of such Churches as were still independent of each other, prove

that the Christian metaphysics took several centuries to work out its formulas and to create the particular rites which were to manifest it in every Church. We can also prove that the eastern Churches have preserved a strong Alexandrian, and consequently a pantheistic tendency in their metaphysics, whilst the Church of Rome gradually drew nearer and nearer to Semitism, which is based on the absolute personality of a god separate from the world. Are we to take this fact as the result of an existing difference of races, or as the outcome of particular causes, and the reaction of the political organization of the Roman clergy upon the fundamental dogma?

Certain it is that when the Âryan mind is left to itself, and is kept far from foreign influence, it immediately goes over to the absolute unity of the being and the substance. This has been proved by the dogmas of Persia and, better still, by those of India. But, on the other hand, the Greeks of the empire and the modern Greeks do not seem to be more Âryan than we or our ancestors; for in the West there are but very feeble traces left of the population which preceded the arrival of the Âryans, and there is nothing to prove that these populations did not formerly inhabit the Greek countries as well as the rest of our continent. Stone hatchets have been found on Hellenic soil. Hence it is quite natural to admit the latter explanation. Indeed, the Church of Rome, once it was constituted into a monarchy, was intended for a "city of God" on earth, a term which exactly answers to the Semitic idea; and thus everything was conducing to the conception which the doctors had formed of God: that He was an all-powerful Prince, then a sovereign Lord and like a king (*Rex tremendæ majestatis*). That part of the Latin ritual which was composed after the separation of the two Churches is full of expressions elucidating this matter. We see thereby that the influence of social and political constitutions of the West reacted upon the metaphysical doctrine itself. If this explanation is right, the problem is solved; it then only remains to be seen why the people of the West should have adopted such

constitutions, which appear to have lessened their religious theory. This is however the general problem of the entire Âryan race. Now in this respect it widely differs from other races, and especially from the Semites; for these latter are, at this present, in the same social condition as two thousand years back: they have never been able to conceive or realize a real political constitution in their midst, whilst the Âryans have governed each successively, more or less rapidly, but at all events uninterruptedly.

As for the fundamental doctrine, we cannot be on the wrong path in premising that it always returns to its early form, and that notwithstanding the alterations imposed upon it by transient causes, it prevails like the spirit of the race which once on a time conceived it for the first time in all its vigour and sincerity. Therefore when we Âryans study and compare the Koran, the Bible, and the *Vêda*, we reject the first as being the work of an inferior race to ours; the second at first surprises, but does not overplease us—we are conscious that the men therein mentioned were not of our race, and that they did not reason as we do; the third has, by the entire modern science, been identified as the bequest of our ancestors—we feel that from them sprang the rays and the substance of those transmutations which we call our heritage. In their pilgrimage some of those rays may have escaped and been wasted, others may have faded into twilight, and many into total darkness. But their paths, which led them from central Asia over the earth, shall be diligently searched by science for the various landmarks of their transmutations. To science it also belongs to reconstitute the earliest idea of doctrine, and to draw up a table of the laws which presided over its transmission.

In the foregoing pages I have illustrated these laws and causes, as far at least as the condition of science permitted. From the discovery of facts these causes will become plainer, and these laws will express themselves by formulas of increasing distinctness. Already we have grasped the unity of the primitive theory on which all great religions are based, found the geographical centre whence it sprang, and

the race which conceived it. As we collect historical facts of every sort, we shall find that this is the centre around which humanity gravitates and tries to co-ordinate its movements. The social and political communities, as well as the influences of race, have given rise to local communities and particular Churches. These are the more or less durable but transitory phases of the common dogma whose elements I have already illustrated. Now the order of nature decrees that every shape, after its functions are exhausted, return to the unity whence it sprang. The shapes of the physical and moral life each appear in turn upon a common stem which is unvarying and imperishable; they there live on a common sustenance. No reasoning will hold local religions exempt from this universal law. We may further rest assured that the exhausting struggles between men for the propagation or the defence of their individual religion are useless efforts, which neither advance nor retard the fulfilment of the law by a single day.

The earth's laws are the mainspring of science, who goes on her course without heed or regard to the workings and agitations of human enactments; she places her foot with imperious serenity into the prints prepared by reason, and contents herself with the knowledge that men cannot be the losers but only the gainers from her relentless operations in the dark region of ignorance.

CHAPTER XII.

BIRTH OF ORTHODOXIES.

EVERY religion that has ever appeared in this world has taken the shape of an orthodoxy. A collection of ideas, rites, and symbols ruled by a more or less complete sacerdotal organization is, I hold it, what is understood by this word. It implies however at the same time the exclusion of every foreign doctrine, worship, or priesthood; every orthodoxy is, in its own estimation, the only good, the only true one. Scarcely a Church but holds intolerance, in that particular sense, to be its fundamental principle and a condition of life. A few Buddhist Churches—the Siamese, for instance, have professed a certain toleration towards outside communities; but if the Buddhist priesthood might have served as a type and pattern to other clerical organizations, the Buddhist doctrines, rites, and symbols are so philosophical, and its morals are so humane, that we may consider it the only one perhaps among all religions that has brought no ideal element of hostility into the world. Had Christianity remained faithful to its eastern origin and to the Master's teaching, and not contracted a pernicious alliance with the worldly, corrupt elements of Græco-Latin society, the same also might have been said in praise of its influence. But in almost every part of Europe its religions have been identified too vividly with political interests; thus casting about with one hand the seeds of good, and with the other the germs of evils which have brought suffering to every generation since, and are perhaps preparing more for the future. It will be seen therefore how important it is for the theory of religions to find out in what manner orthodoxies arise, under what conditions they grow, by what means they

propagate, and with what impetus the course of events brings them to a fatal end.

We have seen that religion first sprang from a psychological phenomenon, and that the primitive doctrine was an individual one. At that early stage there can have been no opportunity for a diversity of opinion. Opinions generally make themselves heard only after they have gained proselytes, and when several persons have voted for one particular opinion. But just as thought is an individual phenomenon, so is opinion first of all the fruit of one mind before being the opinion of many people. This has been proved over and over again lately by noticing the course of scientific theories. These, as a rule, spring up in the mind of some obscure scholar in sight of the facts he wishes to elucidate; he divulges his idea to others, who take it up, alter, and extend it, and after some such more or less prolonged obscurity it is at last brought out into the full light of day by a scholar of repute. This growing of ideas has been clearly demonstrated by De Quatrefages' beautiful study on the antecedents of Darwin's theory.

Yet this scholar could not, and no one will ever be able to discover in whose mind first germinated the idea of the transformation of species. All we feel sure about is, that such a man must have once existed to whose mind the idea presented itself in quite a rudimentary shape at first; that then it grew, had different phases stamped with the seal of more or less celebrated names, and at last presented itself in a popular form to the minds of all living beings. It is forthwith enrolled in the ranks of science, and after triumphantly overcoming all discussions and contradictions, its claims are established by those very men who once held the most divergent views.

There is no reason for doubting that such was the case with religions that went over to the orthodox state. Indeed, if we take it that religion be an ancient form of science, and the summary of several generations' scientific work, it seems impossible not to admit that the early notion whence it sprang was individual; moreover it must have

been rudimentary, very vague, and not presentable by any precise formula. On the other hand, it must have been very comprehensive, or, rather, sufficiently filled with a power of development to keep up the interest and satisfy the demands of generations. A narrow idea is soon exhausted; when it no longer puts forth it becomes useless, and instead of spreading it dies in oblivion. As I remarked before, the Âryan idea had a marvellous power of development and plasticity; for it simultaneously produced the religions of India, Persia, Greece, and Italy, of the Celts, the Germans, the Scandinavians, and comparatively recently Buddhist communities and Christian Churches.

Now if on departing from these latter forms, which are for ever growing more varied, we turn our attention to the times when they only existed potentially in the Âryan dogmas of the Oxus valleys, we shall be drawing near to their common origin, without however detecting the cradle of their first notion. This notion may have been conceived on the day when fire was first kindled, and illumined the earliest human intelligence in its perplexity. The theory of the fire is already quite developed, and its formulas plainly set forth in the Vêdic hymns, and in the older portions of Zoroaster's books. These records being, for the Âryan race, the oldest that we possess and that we may ever hope to possess, we must content ourselves with proceeding by inference toward the period that went before.

Those far off times were also a period of elaboration. The intellectual process must have rested on the same laws as those which dictated in all times, for we know that nature does not destroy her code at one moment in order to create a new one. So that the inferences which are founded on well proved subsequent facts may with like assurance be applied to foregoing facts. This is an incontestable law of science. Now the Vêdic hymns enable us to see with our own eyes the last act of the intellectual process whence sprang the Vêdic theory of fire, life, and thought; it shows us the structure in the act of being raised by the combined individual efforts of superior-minded

men. Brâhminism shows us the same phenomenon, and again we meet it in Buddhist and Christian councils, only in larger proportions and with more striking features. How can we doubt then that one and the same track was followed by the men who preceded the *Vêda* and *Avesta* period? Moreover it is an almost established fact that the Âryan transmigrations into Europe parted from the common centre of the race before the corresponding periods of these sacred books. The comparison of the early dogmas of European tribes with those of Âryan Asiatic tribes carries us therefore to very remote periods. The clearing away of differences found between them leads back again to their common creed, in a simpler form than any one among them, and with more proximity to their origin. Certain it is, that if, in the course of centuries, individual searchings have been the point of departure for each particular development of religion, and consequently the cause of diversity among themselves, individual searchings have also given birth to the primitive dogma, and, we may assume, there must have been an original idea whence sprang this dogma.

When that one first man communicated his idea to his fellow men, it was either accepted or combated, since that is the fate of all ideas. It had to fight therefore for its very life. Now what follows will show that the idea attracted many minds, owing to the superiority of its premises; for it ended in being the common dogma of our entire race, and still continues to transmit itself to races foreign and inferior. So there must have been a period at which this idea emerged, from being individual and private, into a common and public one. That we might call the period of the incubation of orthodoxy.

If we agree with some scholars, that the doctrine was, as an explicit whole, revealed to this first man, we must also look upon everything that has been added since as a deviation, as the outcome of a feeble will and abilities gone astray—with one word we condemn every religion of the primitive stock; and, finally, we enter into a headlong maze

of contradictions and hypotheses, not one of which is compatible with the most elementary scientific methods. A much fairer construction seems to be that expressed by several Vêdic poets, being evidently the same as that of St. John the Evangelist and of many other learned men of past or modern times. Their idea was that the revelation dawns in each of us, an idea which does away with the imputed irreconcilability of religion and science; it discloses the whole past of orthodoxies, reveals its present condition, and throws a light on its future.

Thus the order of nature, which insists on every shape beginning very small, comes into force here as elsewhere. As soon as a man imparts his idea to another, he entrusts it to him that he may bring into play his own powers of fertilization. If the idea is sound, it fructifies like a good seed, and grows by its own analysis; every time the idea is freshly adopted and worked by the individual forces and resources of a select intellect, the idea grows with renewed vigour. Indeed, it is a fact beyond doubt that the fire theory at first only comprised the most immediate and perceptible material phenomena, and that even the solar origin of the fire was not discovered till much later. After which it took a long time and much mental speculation before the psychological agent was detected, together with its responsibility for the phenomena of life. Not until the Vêdic period was fire identified with the principle of thought; in proof of which we have only to read those hymns which are attributed to the poets Viçwâmitra and Dîrghatamas. And, lastly, the great metaphysical theory which invests the neuter name of Brâhm is subsequent to the hymn period. In western Asia the same activity of the mind was in operation; for the same absolute principle of the Persians, known by the name of *Akarana*, or "the inactive being," is subsequent to the almost Manichæan doctrine of Ormuzd and Ahriman, which doctrine is itself Manichæan in the oldest parts of the *Zend-Avesta*. They contain a doctrine something like that of the Indian hymns. Therefore it is historically impossible to suppose that the Âryan dogmas upon which

orthodoxies gradually grafted themselves can have come ready made into the world. On the contrary, it is seen that facts tally with analysis, and that the individual action upon the formation of dogma can admit of no doubt. It is by personal discoveries, which gradually accumulated in the community, that public faiths were developed. They first pointed to natural phenomena, produced either spontaneously or by human process. That part of the oldest doctrines that relates to fire refers to natural fires; when however man learnt to call up this powerful agent at his own free will, he considered his existence to have outgrown its former meanness, and fire was henceforth the chief object of his contemplation and worship. I need not call back to the minds of my readers the rapturous cries sent up by the ancient poets when they extol the marvellous power of fire. But such cries are even now to be heard; we need only go into the villages of France on St. John's Day, and see the dancing in the evening, and hear the shouts of joy when the villagers dance wildly around the flaming faggots. Far more beautiful and instructive for us are however the Vêdic hymns in honour of Agni.

Indeed, the earliest doctrine sprang from the mind reflecting upon the possible extraction of fire, the sources of its supply, and the effect of its power. The facility of renewing it each day, and of calling up the same order of phenomena, gave rise each time to the same observations; and these observations gradually suggested the expressions and formulas that descended from father to son and branching generations. These formulas, without their phenomena, assumed an abstract and poetic value. They were of no strictly religious nature, except when pronounced before the sacred hearth; away from it they were a mere recollection. How powerful was the significance however when the priest, or, more strictly speaking, the man elected for that office, found himself in the presence of Agni concealed in the *aranî*, which, by the friction of two pieces of wood, he caused to appear, placed it on dried grass and on the faggots on the altar, gave it the unction of butter, fed it with

spirituous liquors and holy cakes, saw its flames leap to heaven, illumining nature around and dispelling the darkest shadows! Then his mind swelled with crowding thoughts, his soul was stirred, and his exultation found relief in acts of grace and in hymns of joy. The words of his mouth, which the bystanders heard, carried light and conviction into their hearts; they "united with one accord" with the priest, "and were as one mind" in many bodies.

I have borrowed this picture and most of the expressions from the earliest Indian hymns. The authors, as they said themselves, only repeated what their ancestors had founded. We naturally deduce that religion began, at its earliest stage, in the double nature of doctrine and worship; but since fire is within reach of all men, and can be kindled every day by a father in the presence of his wife, his children, his friends, and servants, there was no reason why this ceremony should not be performed on the hearth of every single family. And this practice, we may take it, subsequently brought about in its own proportions individual varieties of theories. Hence the diversity of names applied to the active principle of fire, life, and thought. This diversity is very noticeable in going from one hymn to the next, but still more striking from one nation to another in the Âryan race. An example of this will be found in the legend of Agni with the Indians, which has its corresponding legend in the Prometheus of the Hellênes. The formation of isolated religious centres was greatly favoured by the rough and impracticable state of the earth, by the absence of roads, and by the more or less nomadic life of the populations, which were moreover rare and scattered.

In this way the doctrines long remained confined within the family circle, and religion assumed a domestic or at most a patriarchal aspect, which the *Vêda* gives here and there. This ceased however when the wandering tribes settled down in their respective countries, and there formed social and political communities. It was then that the religious chiefs nearly everywhere commenced drawing near to each

other, and meeting in certain spots set aside for the purpose. In India the meetings were principally held on the borders of certain lakes, or at the confluence of certain rivers; in Greece, for unknown reasons, they gathered in places that are even now celebrated, at Dodona, at Delos, at Delphi, at Olympia, and elsewhere. Whenever, for reasons stated before, the people were forced to adopt a common doctrine, one master mind was sure to rise up in their midst, who emitted theories that were subsequently discussed, rectified, extended, and finally accepted as and constituted into a common dogma. Since fire had become a sacred thing, the groundwork of worship was of course the same for all, and thus the two elements of religion were each accepted by the entire community; dogma and worship thenceforward partook of a public and national character.

This proves to us beyond a doubt that orthodoxies did not suddenly come into the world, but only in the order of time. Only when the heads of families drew together and by common accord set up common dogmas, there sprang out of their midst that communion of doctrines and worship which Latins called *religion*. This word indeed does not mean, as is commonly believed, the bond between man and God, but the circle which incloses men into one system of dogmas and sacred ceremonies. This is almost synonymous with orthodoxy; only this latter expression conveys an idea of exclusiveness on which we shall have to dwell at greater length. Whn an opinion declares itself to be sound and true, it implies that every different opinion can be neither one nor the other. Such a declaration of principles comprises not only the fundamental doctrine, but also the sacred rite whence it sprang and the symbols which represent it. Orthodoxy then bears on every element of religion. There may be religions without orthodoxy, or in which orthodoxy is less severe than in others. The adherents of these are allowed a certain latitude in the interpretation of abstract theories and metaphysics. Such a one was Brâhminism for centuries running; such another was the ancient religion of Greece; and such are in many respects the greater part

of Protestant sects. When orthodoxy rests upon the very principles of doctrine, it naturally embraces all branches, rites, symbols, and very soon after the morals and their application. When this psychological phenomenon has reached its zenith, then religion puts out all its human strength and becomes, as it were, irresistible; all its forces are urged into one direction, like the assembled drops of a river which leaps over the sides of a waterfall, or like the particles of the atmosphere in a hurricane.

This describes the early nature of orthodoxies and the manner in which they come. Their point of departure for the Âryan race was central Asia; they only took definite shape however and reached their respective development in divers localities and epochs; their history is parallel with that of religion. Let us see now what were the stages at which they were first of all found and in which they exist now.

Lighting a fire and performing certain gestures around it may be done by any man gifted with the commonest moral and physical faculties; but the ability to compose a hymn is not in every one's power. If this hymn is intended to be a description, a theory, and a psalm all in one, the art of composing naturally falls to the lot of a few mortals only. Coupled with the natural inability of most men are the imperative demands of life, and the daily duties on which existence depends. The dividing of religious communities into two classes, priests and others, is therefore a very ancient, one might say primitive, institution; it lies in the nature of things. Thus we find it not only in the oldest legend of the *Vêda*, but in the historical documents of Egypt, over five thousand years before our era. The words which designate the priestly class have varied according to each country and its tongue. Latins and Greeks called them sacrificers; in central Asia they had the same common noun as the gods, *dêvas*, or shining beings, because of their sacred ornaments and the bright glow thrown on them by their fires. When the public sacrifices had been instituted, and the number of officiating

priests first reached four and then seven, each one took the appropriate name of his function, and henceforward there was a sort of organized clergy attached to each altar.

In the *Rig-Vêda*, in the *Sâma-Vêda*, and in all the other Vêdic books we have the details of this organization, which contains the germs of the organization of modern ceremonies. Without entering here into details which are foreign to our subject, we will only mention this one fact: that there was then a sacred inclosure, similar to the choir of our churches, into which only the priests were admitted, and the personages who on solemn occasions performed the rites of the ceremony. The "everlasting gates" opened to admit "the glorious King," that is to say, the shining fire; then they closed again against the "profane" gazing crowd.

So, from an early date, each community was divided into two classes of persons, priests and laymen. The performance of ceremonies was the exclusive lot of the former. As a natural consequence, they had moreover, to the exclusion of laymen, the function and soon after the right of interpreting ceremonies, of expounding the old hymns, of giving forth new metaphysical formulas, engendered in their brains, and of framing moral and political codes. The priests were deemed wise and the laymen ignorant. This latter class even comprised kings, whose sole distinction lay in their riches and their martial authority. This state of ignorance in kings and princes lasted a long time; for we find it again with the Greeks in the *Odyssey*, in Rome until the time of the Scipios, and with us during the entire epic period of the middle ages. Even to this day in India the raja caste is so ignorant, that English governors were obliged to warn them of the danger which awaited them of losing their position and prestige among subjects who were getting learned as well as wealthy.

Thus sacerdotal exclusiveness was established, and soon all over the world there was a class of men who had the privilege of being versed in the sacred business of their own country, to appoint and to maintain orthodoxy. Their condition among their fellow men was most advantageous:

not only were they the acknowledged headquarters of learning, but their functions were the pleasantest and the most esteemed; they enjoyed perfect security, and through royal protection and the people's ministerings they were placed outside the pale of all worldly cares. After Buddhism and later on Catholicism had abolished the sacerdotal caste for ever, and instituted the celibacy of priests, the condition of these latter was improved still more; for without being deprived of any of their former advantages, they were by this new code exempted from all family ties and domestic casualties.

Whatever were its organization and the distance set up between them and the congregation, the priests alone were entrusted with the care of developing and defending orthodoxy; that is to say, the common creed with its rites and symbolism. The centres where the formulas of faith were discussed and tried were first of all in the privacy of small colleges of priests, then in the large sacerdotal meetings and in councils. No other classes of the community could at any time have joined in such discussions for want of general learning and the special knowledge of traditions. They were compelled therefore, by their moral condition and by the nature of their social functions, to accept as incontrovertible truths the formulas of faith which emanated from college and council. But I may also add that it fully answered their purpose. Now we know that the Âryan immigrants, the farther they got from central Asia the more completely they lost all recollection of their old country. They settled in different countries, divided by rivers, mountains, and seas, at a time when their common faith existed only under the most general forms, and possessed no appropriate terms for sacred things and the divinity: there was then no orthodoxy. But when each tribe or people had at last formed its centre into political organizations, the principles of the sacred science began to unfold under various conditions and in different degrees. The immense comprehension or, as we called it before, plasticity, of these principles facilitated their application in every country occupied by Âryans.

And thus sprang up as many sacred tongues, systems of rites, sacerdotal organizations, orthodoxies in fact, as there were Âryan communities in Asia, Europe, and later on in Africa and the New World.

Now science has shown and proved by renewed discoveries that these communities were the supplanters of others that had been there before; that they subjugated, humiliated, and treated them in every way as their aliens in blood. The country about which we know most in this respect is India. When the Âryans descended into it along the valleys of Kabul, they numbered but a few, and their adversaries, who were of an inferior race, numbered many. Their orthodoxy placed their system of castes on such marvellous solidity and their sacerdotalism on such a lofty pinnacle above the enslaved barbarians, that the Âryan race retained in full and to this very day intact the purity of its highest caste.

This orthodoxy they naturally defended with might and main, since it sanctioned the gulf between them and the "impious Dasyus and eaters of raw flesh." This gulf was most formidable on the Indus; but it existed elsewhere too, only in a less degree and under different conditions; everywhere however orthodoxy was the protecting power and the preserving element of races. A living proof we have of this in the Hellênes, the holders of a Christian orthodoxy, who, whilst they freely mixed with northern and even Turanian races, as for instance the Bulgarians, their brothers in orthodoxy, steadfastly rejected another portion of this same Turanian race, the Turks, on account of their faith. We see by this that it is not always races which keep orthodoxies apart, but that orthodoxies sometimes keep races depart. Therefore if at this moment it were found, and could be proved, that humanity's welfare depended on the fusion of races, the steps to be taken first would be the suppression of private and national orthodoxies. The civilization of the West seems to be striding in that direction; but the rest of the inhabitants of this globe are still far from entertaining such intentions.

The example I have just quoted shows that orthodoxy does not only assert itself in the heart of a community in order to keep the elements separate and subordinate, as in India, but also as nation against nation. There were two orthodox systems in the East, greatly similar and united in common origin, yet their mutual hate was so great as to force two neighbouring and fraternal nations into combat: those were the Indians and the Persians. Can there be two less dissimilar orthodoxies than the Greek and the Latin? Yet in the crusades these two kept up a furious contest with each other; and even now that religious ravings are at an end, the convocation which the Latin pope addressed to the bishops of the East was for sacerdotal reasons rejected, and these latter have elected to remain Musulman subjects. Histories are pregnant with such instances; they are a succession of struggles in the cause of orthodoxies, each one trying to gain the mastery over the other and to gather nations around their banners.

When an orthodoxy has sprung up in the centre of a community, its inevitable condition is one of double strife, the internal strife against the social powers which may set up obstacles, and the outward strife against foreign orthodoxies. There are nations whose orthodoxy has no tendency to outward manifestation, simply because they are large and well supported communities, which do not require to seek for support among strangers in order to maintain their existence, and widen their field: such a nation was India. When different social conditions create in orthodoxy the spirit of proselytism, it is not only aggressive at home, but obtrusive and arrogant abroad.

When Buddhism first realized how difficult it would be to conquer the valley of the Ganges, the birthplace of Buddhism, its missionaries spread abroad in all directions, and founded centres of orthodoxy in Nepaul, in Tibet, in Samarcand, in China, in Siam, in Ceylon, and in several other countries. Neither did their Churches conquer without striking a blow, notwithstanding the mildness of their views and purpose; still Buddhism was

not long in overcoming these countries, where as yet no orthodox system of any value had been established. It was the same when Christianity arrived in the West; for though Greece and Rome were at the apex of civilization, their sole religious bulwarks were a decaying and disjointed polytheism. Perhaps it required no very powerful spirit of proselytism to conquer the east of Europe; indeed the Greek Church numbers few martyrs, and has no longer any apostles. The Latins however have a superabundance of saints, martyrs, and confessors; Catholics and Protestants have a system of missions which embrace the entire terrestrial sphere.

These are the general conditions from which no orthodoxy can escape: the struggle for existence and extension is a double and, from its nature, a self-imposed law, the only remedy against which lies in dissolving and ceasing to be.

There is a third struggle, of a more subtle nature, and one from which orthodoxy has more to fear than from the other two: of this I will now speak. When the two first men met for the discussing of a religious theory, they may have agreed on all points and closed in perfect communion. But they may also have disagreed on some point, and it is evident that neither of them had any right or power to enforce his opinion upon the other. The arrival of a third man did not solve this difficulty: for he may have himself cherished a personal opinion; or if not, he certainly did not, any more than the other two, possess rights or power of enforcement. In fact, individual thought is as inviolable as it is inaccessible. There is nothing in one man that is not in another; whatever the difference, it is but slight, and there is no code which can sit in judgment over these depths of the soul or prescribe limits of intelligence for respective capabilities. The individual right over the mind remains indivisible and incontestable. It is alike intransmissible, unprescribable, inalienable. This right is the more absolute as it applies to more abstract and metaphysical matters, of which the highest is religious doctrine.

Indeed, the idea of God cannot be passed on like coins of money; the conceptions of the mind are individual pheno-

mena, which rise up in us or not as the case may be, but which are certainly beyond the control of our neighbours. Moreover, as nothing in us seems to possess the power of free agency but our will alone, all the rest is submissive to fatal laws which ancient and modern psychology have testified and defined. No human power can change at will the thought of a man, since that man cannot do so himself. Every action in this respect can only be indirect, and solely by the alteration of object and points of view can any influence be effected; but since we have no hold upon the object of religious thought, and this same thought acts upon our intelligence in such a simple and immediate manner, the opinion we each form on this head is absolutely independent of that of other people. The forming of an orthodox community is always by its component members supposed to be the embodiment of a common, undivided thought; but this is rarely the case. Admitting even that they do start their college "with one accord" and with undivided minds, who can say how rapidly each mind will develop, each new principle spring up, each intelligence expand, and then gradually divaricate from its companions as the sun's rays do from each other? Then if the existing principles be flexible enough to allow the intrusion of such apparent contradictions, and when the religious community gives signs of probable duration, there will be seen rapidly growing up in it that which is now-a-days designated by two contradictory words, the principle of authority. In other words, those who belong to the college make a denial of their own private will; they take sides with the judgment of the majority, and mutually extract the promise of submission if ever their personal opinions dictate to the contrary. It is not possible for any orthodoxy to persist except by such a tacit agreement: all religious assemblies, ancient or modern, Buddhist or Christian, where dogmas have been discussed and adopted, have admitted the principle of authority and practised it. The opinion of the majority has become the article of faith; and what is called "personal will" dwindles into submission and abnegation.

Every orthodoxy then rests upon a convention, and this convention implies an almost superhuman effort, whose success has always been attributed to Divine grace.

In organized orthodoxies, in large Churches, this same phenomenon arises, only in greater proportions. They are, in fact, founded on the co-existence of a clergy and a nation of believers. It has even happened that the clergy have descended into the ranks of believers and made themselves one with the people, and resigned the functions of self-instruction, discussion, and decision of formulas of faith into the hands of one of their body. In either case the laity receive these formulas ready made, repeat them without inquiring into their ideal meaning, and take them simply as more or less properly interpreted rules of life. And this may be said to have happened in nearly every religion, in different degrees, and in proportion with the more or less pronounced form of orthodoxy. In Brâhmin India the abnegation of the laity was so great, that the different castes agreed to their only receiving a part share of the sacred doctrine, never a full participation in, and sometimes an utter exclusion from the ceremonies of worship. Hence it was that when Buddhism, the work not of a priest but of a raja, first proclaimed the religious equality of men and opened to all the condition of priesthood, all the inferior castes that Brâhminism had stripped of their natural rights answered to the call. It was just the same in the West; for there also sacerdotalism was an aristocratic and a caste institution, not only with the Persians, the Egyptians, and the Jews, but even in the Græco-Roman world, when Christianity made its first efforts to submerge such distinctions.

But by-and-by those two religions, which seemed made for rendering justice to men, cancelled this justice again, and their Churches founded the most hostile orthodoxies that had ever infringed upon the individual thought of man. The breach between clergy and laity became so wide, that the word *church* (the *saṅgă* of the Buddhists) was henceforth by the people regarded as synonymous with the word *clergy*, and not with its early and legitimate meaning, which

is, the congregation of the faithful. In this respect there is no difference between the Latin Church and the eastern, notwithstanding that the former exclusively claims the qualification of orthodox. Orthodoxies are such as they are made; the assemblies of the Latin clergy have had as much right to discuss doctrines as the assemblies of the Greek clergy have had not to discuss them. The right of changing a dogma or a rite is as entire as that of not changing it; and if the orthodoxy founded by these latter has remained unaltered for so many centuries, it does not so much prove the infallibility of their opinions as the ignorance and torpor into which both priests and people have sunk. But so soon as these countries shall have begun life afresh, with their mental powers free from slavery and from the disastrous influence of Russia, the consequences will be either deserted churches or a growth and transformation of the religious current of ideas.

But however severely both clergy and congregation may frown upon new views and opinions, our brain will not for that allow itself to be lulled into passiveness nor forced into violating the presiding law of its unceasing functions. The diversity of religions, which at one time all issued from the same spring, is the most striking proof of this, for these diversities are the handiwork of the doctors' activity in their respective communities; they grew, and at last ended as new symbols of faith or even sometimes as separate morals. The perusal of council records would soon convince us of the share which both Greek and Latin doctors had in the creating of schisms and of the arbitrariness and assertive personality of the bishops. Every breach in the orthodoxy may be attributed to some such personal influence on the part of bishops; as indeed all vague and shapeless dogmas have been at one time or another moulded by discussion into final orthodoxies, by the same mental elements that produce heterodoxies, heresies, and individual opinions. Only, in orthodox communities the number of subjected minds is greater; in heresies it is less, and in individual opinions it is reduced to a unity.

The greater part of heresies arises from discussions or from council meetings; they are the work of priests. Dogmatic assemblies have been known to divide themselves into two almost equal parts, the larger of the two, by just a few voices perhaps, declaring itself to be the only orthodox authority. The whole of the eastern Church was once invaded by Arianism and induced to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ; Athanasius single handed turned the tide of individual opinions into the channel of ancient orthodoxy once more. And quite recently again, the Germanic races have nearly all fallen away from the Roman Church, alleging no other reason than the individual freedom of the mind. This reason as being a natural right required no demonstration; they merely reconquered that which their fathers had trifled away.

When a dissidence springs up in a community of believers, and one side claims this right, it is rarely prompted by a religious motive. Indeed, the halving of orthodox communities into clergy and laity excludes these latter from gaining more than a superficial knowledge of the established dogmas, barely what is required for the cementing of practices and the maintenance of a system of morals. The Brâhmin teaching was thorough with the Brâhmins, less developed with the xattriyas, exceedingly reduced with the third caste, and non-existing with the fourth. The Greeks and the Romans had nothing in the shape of a catechism, and the revealing of the mysteries was even supposed to entail terrible consequences. The teaching of Buddhism and Christianity were at first progressive, and might have guided any neophyte to the consummation of the theory; but gradually there came the dividing of priests from the laity. Now-a-days, all over Buddhist Asia and Christian Europe, no instruction, with regard to articles of faith, is thought necessary beyond that received in the schoolroom and from the pulpit, neither of which possesses great inducements for laymen to go deeply into religious questions; any activity of the mind bearing on such matters is solely roused by unorthodox tendencies.

These tendencies may all be comprised in one word, science. Since science remodels religions, not without the aid however of new resources and progressive methods, it is impossible for the clergy, the preservers of orthodoxies, to admit the principle of science, which is individual freedom, without destroying the foundation of faith; hence science and the clergy cannot work together. Again: lay and free science cannot repudiate her natural problems without involving self-contradiction and self-condemnation. Science therefore, whatever her denomination, will always, by her fierce light, strike terror into the heart of theses which orthodoxy had previously either established or suppressed. Hence this inevitable and sometimes violent antagonism which in every country has existed and still does between orthodoxy and science, the former declaring the problem to be solved, the latter controverting and questioning it.

In communities where the transmission of faith and the dictating of religious articles have been entrusted to sacerdotal hierarchies, science steps in to vindicate the right of individual thought, to protest against orthodoxy, and to prove continually that fathers cannot bind their sons to their own faith, and that the sons themselves have not the power of stifling their reasoning powers.

I shall show farther on that the better the understanding between science and religion, the farther off it will keep orthodoxies. There is as much difference between religion and orthodoxy, as there is between free thought and blind obedience. Religion at its birth and for a long while after invited men to freedom; in its essence it does so still. But once that condition set in which physiologists call "*ossification*," it lost its inherent spontaneity and plasticity, and, like amber, it seized and buried in its hardening matter all that came within its reach.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GREATNESS AND THE FALL OF ORTHODOXIES.

DIRECTLY we have defined the general conditions in which orthodoxies are placed, we ought to find out in what manner and by what means they propagate and succeed in establishing their dominion. The comparative history of the numerous orthodox Churches of ancient and modern times tells us that there are three processes: teaching, characteristic rites, and alliances. Wherever teaching failed, orthodoxy was deprived of its principal support, and the sacerdotal class was unable to organize a proper clergy, as in the case of the ancient Hellênes, for instance, and of the Latins; their sacerdotal colleges were always very numerous and mutually independent, even when there was a sovereign pontiff at Rome, and when its prince had become a sort of pope, or czar, or minister of worships. But when Christian Churches sprang up and conferred among themselves, and when the councils had given a decisive expression to the articles of faith, orthodoxy grew very rapidly.

The unity of belief was powerfully upheld by the mode of religious teaching which was pursued, and which compelled the new converts to undergo many successive gradations of initiation before they were declared Christian.

The Buddhist Church had pursued the same teaching for several hundred years when Jesus began His preachings; it does still pursue it in every country where that religion is professed. The book[1] in which the rules of the teaching are set forth was translated into the languages of all the countries in which Buddhist missionaries went to settle;

[1] A complete copy of that work known as the *Tripitaka*.

and as it also contains the laws pertaining to the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the developed formulas of metaphysics and morals, the orthodox beliefs could not but be alike in all the parts of the world that professed the worship of Buddha. The divergences which sprang up subsequently in several countries, in Tibet, for instance, were simply the local consequences of certain dogmas whose primitive formulas were not sufficiently developed.

We know from recent investigations that at first the Christian dogmas were not as explicit as they are now. For instance, the teachings of the first few centuries had not the precision obtained in subsequent centuries. The early days of Christianity were the most pregnant with heresies; each heresy came in the wake of an article of faith which had not existed before. It is a strange fact that dogma was only properly defined in the reign of Constantine, when teaching was first administered in public in the presence of men of whatsoever religion. If the Roman emperors had tolerated the Christian religion a century earlier, orthodoxy would have asserted itself under great difficulties, because the unsettled dogmas would have given rise to vulgar discussions among philosophers and pagans instead of the exclusive discussions of believers and doctors; but as soon as Constantine had acknowledged Christianity as one of the State religions, its teachings were held in public and in the conditions of an indisputable orthodoxy. Since then there have been no alterations except those which were enforced by order of councils, and then officially admitted into the Churches. Orthodoxy has now, as it were, seen the last of its changes, and missionaries take it as prescribed by the European clergy into far off nations.

Teaching, as may be seen, is the usual means of propagating orthodoxies; yet it is not all-sufficient. Not only does it risk being coldly received or soon forgotten, but it is often brought into baneful collision with old doctrines that destroy the new, such a collision being due to the inflexibility of orthodox formulas. Here is an example of it. When the Catholic missionaries went to China to preach

their religion among the Buddhists, they taught the *Pater* and spoke of God as "the king of heaven." These latter words are the very ones used by the whole Buddhist Church to designate Indra, which is a sort of angel many degrees inferior to Buddha; Catholicism was therefore looked upon as idolatry, and the teachings fell on barren ground. The Protestant missions however succeeded better, in not committing these mistakes. This shows us that teaching not only loses its efficacy before cold indifference, it also glances off when its thrusts are too hard.

The rites which accompany the teaching may be reckoned as a great impetus. I am not merely alluding to those which display the formulas of faith, and when performed at the altar speak to the initiated in a kind of ideographical language, but those also which appeal to each individual man, ceremonies which attend his birth and every phase of life until the hour of death. Each orthodoxy has its own applications. In the hymns of the *Vèda* there are some most beautiful and simple rites used at birth, marriage, and death. The Greeks had analogous rites; so had the Latins, the Germans, and the Scandinavians. We are acquainted with the funeral rite of the Egyptians and with several of their personal ceremonies. Brâhmin orthodoxy organized some to suit the different castes of Indian society; Buddhism added some new ones. Lastly, Christians made their lives into a perfect network of ideally significant ceremonies, even the Catholic outstripping the eastern Church in pomp and majesty.

Most of these rites, called sacraments, do not properly belong to Christianity, they existed long before; nearly all of them are Vêdic and contain the fundamental theory of all Âryan religions. Each orthodoxy however owns its particular forms. Thus the Catholic baptism has very little resemblance with that of the Greeks, though their origin is the same; likewise communion, marriage, mass, and burial. Nevertheless by these very rites every man on each of these solemn occasions is led back within the pale of his Church and confronted with the authority of its

bonds, bonds which are generally very sweet and not attached to any great sacrifices. At the price of a few sensual privations man reaps a harvest of ideal and pure pleasures which make his "yoke very light." Those temptations which nature has placed on the dangerous slope are however so hedged in and defended by the recollection of early teaching, solemn oaths, and promises as only deliberate ruthlessness could violate. The Divine grace enters into the sense and reason of man; he feels and openly confesses to it; his soul is new born; he has put off the old man; he walks in the glory of his Church; he is ready to fight and to die for it, until the time when the cares of this life and the struggle for existence rouse him again to sad reality. This reality is what wears out and breaks the delicious chains of orthodoxy. The getting of food and drink, the toil of agriculture, of commerce, and even of the nobler professions help to drive from our minds the mystical happiness of the saints and the elect. India, fully realizing that happiness, invented an heroic remedy as an escape from the worrying occupations of life, and that was mendicity. The true Yôghi gives up everything; he has no home, he covers himself with a rag, he picks up a broken piece of crockery in the street and goes begging his maintenance from door to door. Of course, a Yôghi is a sluggard, who gets himself fed by those who work; if everybody were to follow his example, everybody and himself included would starve whilst meditating on "the perfections of the Yôga."

These are some of the deviations from orthodoxy instanced in every religion, and which are alone attributable to the folly of mankind. Now the difference between the ideal religion and orthodoxy is this: that the former is drowned in the flood of daily cares, whilst the latter invariably contracts advantageous alliances with life's realities. This explains why each religion in turn has moulded itself on the political system of the country.

Ever since the *Vêda*, not to mention Egypt, whose records are earlier than those of India and Persia, sacerdotalism and royalty had formed an alliance in India; yet

the forming of castes is a fact which came after the period of the hymns or very shortly before their close—a fact worthy of observation, for it proves that the political institution of Brâhminism was founded at the same time as its religious orthodoxy. This latter, in the laws of Manu, which are in our possession, became the firmest support of the social and political system; and this system in return assured, one might almost say, an unlimited duration to Indian orthodoxy.

According to the hieroglyphic records, the Egyptian creeds do not seem to have been fixed or arranged into any system before the end of the fourth dynasty; they were in force until the conquest of that country by Cambyses, and from that time forth they fell into rapid decay. We know that the mental faculties of the Egyptians were not such as to elevate their ideas beyond the standard they had reached and not swerved from since their early days. The long duration of their orthodoxy, which comprises perhaps forty centuries, must be attributed to their political system, with which orthodoxy walked hand in hand.

Though Brâhminism was founded by a progressive and therefore a mobile race, at least twelve or fifteen centuries before Jesus Christ, it still flourishes; it is like a very powerful ancient and well regulated piece of machinery, that we watch at its work. Now to whom do the propagators of western civilization show open defiance, with a view to preparing India for the adoption of Christian notions? To the system of castes, of course; that is to say, to a political institution. To what did Buddhism owe its rapid successes during the early centuries of its existence? To the blows which it struck at that same institution. Therefore the alliance with this institution it is that maintains the religious orthodoxy, and frustrates every attempt at freedom. We cannot hold a review of every orthodoxy. Let me only say a few words about the Christian Church. Its history is divided into three periods: its struggle, its suffering, and its triumph, which latter dates from Constantine. This emperor did not proscribe all the other

religions, but, being himself a Christian, he raised the new religion to the throne, appointed Christians for the political and civic offices all over his empire, and invested his creed with a freedom of action and propaganda never before enjoyed. This sovereign was therefore honoured by the Church, though he neither as emperor nor man deserved any high regard. In a like manner Buddhism had, six centuries before, found its Constantine in the great convert king Açôka. The alliance between orthodoxy and politics which the emperor crowned in his own person exists to this day, both in the eastern and in the western Churches. We need not go through the whole history of the Church; suffice it only to remember her distinguishing tendency, her unrelaxed watchfulness of the political heaven, and her ready adaptation to every form of government, feudal and monarchical, this change from feudalism to monarchy in itself affording an important occasion for the display of her power, for aspiring patricians could only turn for support to the Church that was now centred in Rome. The Roman orthodoxy was for a time the preponderating political power; it exercised an uncontrolled authority alike over kings, patricians, and people. Gradually however this rule had to relax; for in order to win back their forfeited independence, kings took for their allies the populace, that mass of unbelievers who individually represent the principle of liberty. After this the Church sustained a second blow in the Reformation, which alienated it from entire nations, and a third one in the Revolution.

Now let us for a moment compare the present aspect of the Latin orthodoxy with its past. At this moment it is surrounded by injured and resentful nations, by controversial lay institutions, by sciences that can but remake or mar its condition, by hostile Germanic peoples, and by a huge wave of civilization, upon which the Church of Peter is tossed like a ship on the ocean. And yet the Roman clergy still cling to political power as the one safety and protection of their orthodoxy. Now it is not so much the alliance between Church and State that has fallen off, but

the allies themselves. How can nations be the allies of a Church that closes her sanctuary against them? What more natural than that they should turn elsewhere for the light that is denied them there? And one by one, we, the impartial spectators, watch the loosening of those cords that once bound together the altar and the throne.

The alliance between religion and State does not only greatly strengthen the sacred theory and its rites, but also appoints the duration of orthodoxies; these three modes of propagation have however differed according to races, nations, and epochs. I have already pointed out to the reader that in India religious appointments were not bestowed with equality; dogmas and rites were the exclusive province of the Brâhmins: at least, they admitted the royal castes just sufficiently within their precincts to awaken their interest and insure their alliance, and to secure their superiority over the other castes. Likewise the religious participations of the merchant and labouring castes just sufficed to raise them above the unfortunate çûdras, whose lot in life was to serve, but not to rival. The çûdras themselves had no share whatsoever in the Âryan religion, their condition was one of gross superstition. I have now explained how the preservation of the Brâhmin orthodoxy was bound up with this system of castes; it makes us wonder that such beautiful morals as the Brâhmin should be connected with so inhuman a political orthodoxy.

This inconsistency is however perfectly accounted for by modern science, which tells us that it entirely sprang from the diversity of the races. It is pretty well proved that when the Âryans first settled on the Indus they were already a mixed community, in which only the two higher classes were pure, whilst the third contained probably no inconsiderable proportion of Turanian blood; yet even these latter were far above the poor barbarians (*varvara*) whom they found there, so the conquerors without more ado consigned these to a fourth caste, and made them their slaves. A similar fact is recorded of central Asia, where the Medes, mixed perhaps, were subordinated to the Persians, who

were pure Âryans, and who made themselves into the priests and nobles of Cyrus' empire. The same thing took place in a less degree along the Euphrates, after the return of the Dorians; but the absence of baser races confined the castes to three only.

The Latin Church and the modern communities were, as regards races, in a much more complex condition after the invasion and the conversion of the barbarians; yet we find Roman orthodoxy forming an alliance with the conquerors, so as to insure its own sway over the former populations. In the course of time however inter-marriages, the growth of popular power, and indeed the principle of Christianity, which levels all men in the sight of God, ended in mingling the races. The late conquest of the New World has ranked the mixed and almost unified races of Europe with the red and black; thanks to the bloody revolutions that have gone before, oppressive orthodoxies have been deprived of the power, politically and religiously, of embittering the inequality of races in America. The fusion of races there is practically established. Here we see that the propagation of orthodoxies works in different ways according to the different races: in one instance they are systematically kept asunder, in another they exercise their free will to mingle and unite.

The breaking up of the Christian Church into western and Greek has ever since been followed by an incomplete union between the latter and its political government. Its action on the latter has therefore only been a lateral one, as it were, its support coming from family centres and from its own patriarchal organization. The explanation of this is not very far: the fact is, that Greek Christianity established itself in pagan countries, where there was no supreme chief, no national life such as the western, and no political constitution or cohesion of any kind, such as sacerdotalism might have leant on.

The Musulman conquest, by its religious antagonism, saved the Hellenic union, without however contributing any new social element; but besides depriving the con-

quered people of their political existence, it compelled orthodoxy to live on its own resources, that is to say, on its teachings and rites. All this time the eastern Church was developing itself in the North under very different conditions, producing among the Turanians and the Sclavs an orthodoxy in whose triumph the czar's politics were greatly interested. The alliance between power and religion was getting as close as that at Rome; the czar was like the pope of that great Church, and cherished the hope of being some day the pope of all the Christians in the East. The independence which a long war and the support of Europe have given to a small portion of the Hellênes only is a great advantage to Russian orthodoxy in this respect; for while it is the practical protector of the rest of the Greeks, it works its way steadily towards their political as well as religious disappearance. Had a national existence been granted to the Hellenic populations long ago, they would have become quite as formidable enemies of the czar as the Germans ever were to the pope; for the influence of the czar could not have been otherwise than detrimental to their political and religious autonomy.

The epochs of a nation, or peoples, are also greatly influenced by the growth and success of orthodoxies. Both India and the West can instance such facts. When the Âryans spread themselves along the valleys of the Indus, they had not yet the elements of Brâhminism as they appear in the *Vêda*, for the greater portion of those hymns were composed on the banks of that river and its tributaries. The conquerors spread themselves over Kabul and as far as the Saraswatî, which flows north between the Indus and the Ganges, and ends its course in the desert. Their orthodox establishment commenced therefore after the conquest; it grew with their territorial power, grew and became firm with it. There does not seem for the space of a thousand years to have been any serious struggle in the Brâhmin community caused by the Âryan orthodoxy. This latter indeed, from the precision of its formulas and the expressiveness of its codes, became the warrant of

peace within and of progress towards the South. It was only at the coming of Buddha that the principle of individual freedom and religious equality was proclaimed; and into this Roman-like, pacific community there came a trouble to which Buddhism had to succumb. When an orthodoxy springs up in as simply constituted a civilization as Brâhminism was, it naturally and without effort becomes its principal form, with which all other social functions must combine and harmonize. In its maturity it is actually the very expression of a people's civilization; and when this civilization crumbles away into decay, its orthodoxy totters and sinks with it. For a long time Brâhminism had been undermined, the excavations having been begun by Buddhism and carried on by Mongol and Arab invasions; its death-blow was however not dealt until the arrival of the Europeans, whose weapon is a higher principle of civilization.

Christianity made its appearance in the very height of Græco-Roman civilization. Its principles, which were a manifest contradiction of the empire's social and political condition, were also a strong leaven of discord and dissolution in this community. This community was born and bred in a faith that sprang from the same origin as Christianity, in fact, from the early Âryan dogmas; but from having adapted themselves to the remnants of Pelasgic, Hellenic, and Latin civilizations, they had formed a sort of polytheistic orthodoxy, which the Christian doctrine came and contradicted. Such a revulsion in the midst of such a civilization could not but produce a violent struggle. Therefore during the first centuries the Christian communities performed in secret places their teachings and rites, out of reach of the hostile political power. They must have been armed with wonderful energy, will, and confidence in the future, upheld as they were with the mere slender assistance of vague teachings and informal rites. It must be remembered however, that from the very first, Christian preaching was warmly supported by rich and influential men in the empire; this is proved by the

history of persecutions and the quality of the martyrs. The adherents belonging to good families grew in number at a rapid pace; they formed a large proportion in the Christian communities at the time that Constantine embraced the new faith.

A similar difficulty was experienced by Buddhism in India, after creating, for no apparent reason that we know of, the utmost revolution in the centre of a powerful and secular political and religious organization. When the son of Mâyâ, Çâkyamuni, surnamed Buddha, son of a raja, and himself a raja, enticed the people, who were longing to hear him, into the country without the city walls, he taught them none but pure morals, confirmed by marvellous miracles; but when, at his death, the first council met to settle the principal points of the dogma and to organize a Church, the new orthodoxy commanded a sacerdotalism which should be composed, not only of the Âryan castes, but also of the basest, and thereby at the very outset causing the bitterest discord, and striking at the very root of society.

Thus Buddhism was likewise a seed of discord cast into the heart of Brâhminism. Teaching and preaching were carried on in the midst of persecutions; there were renegades and martyrs, confessors, missionaries, and saints, until the old orthodoxy, stronger than the new, banished the latter from its bosom and forced it to find a home elsewhere. Now Christianity was more fortunate in the empire. It conquered the entire West, and even spread its roots into Asia; but there its success came to an end, for its orthodoxy was not one to suit the secular system of the non-Âryan tribes, who readily embraced Islamism when it presented itself. And so thoroughly is it incorporated with its adherents, that it would be an easier matter to banish all and every religion from the hearts of Musulmans, than to induce them to embrace Christianity. Now let us see in what way orthodoxies come to an end, and also let us define the general laws of their decay and the causes of their death. Those causes are less complex than one would imagine, and may even be reduced to a

single one; their action however varies according to time and circumstances. After the founding of the first dogma, which two or three men admitted by common consent their brain or mind, which had freely conceived that dogma, naturally retained that freedom after the founding as before, nor could that dogma be rendered impervious to such freedom. The result is, that every religion has two pyschological elements, one of which represents the assent and authority of the congregation, whilst the other represents the dissent and breeds individual opinions. Needless is it to say that assent is the foundation of orthodoxies, and authority their prop and stay.

Now, on the other hand, all religions proceed from one common source, and are built upon correct though somewhat vague observations of natural phenomena; therefore there is at the bottom of all orthodoxies an amount of common dogmas which represents the primitive religion; only by their various developments and local deviations they ended by taking opposite courses and antagonistic sides. The points upon which everybody might agree are soon thrust into the background and as it were obliterated, whilst discussions thrive and flourish in the fields of dissension. Now between the Allah of the Turks and the God of the Christians there is not any positive difference, neither is the God of the Catholics virtually opposite to the God of the Greeks and Protestants; it is therefore an inherent and individual element that produces individual orthodoxies, and creates different religions, just as in natural history difference constitutes species.

The common element of all religions is by its nature pure, unbiassed, incontrovertible; it is omnipresent in humanity, of unvarying energy, but subject to increasing elucidation with the progress of science. Indeed, the true element of every orthodoxy conforms to the same general laws of development and decline as any other form of natural creation, and the number of its allotted days in every country may best be represented by a geometrical curve. In proportion as orthodoxy gains in local expediency and in the

severity of its formulas, the spirit of individual liberty gains by opposition, and from first to last performs its leading part in the history of heresies. As soon as an orthodoxy attains its completion heresies cease with the discontinuance of discussive subjects; but not so the individual, indestructible spirit of liberty, which continues to manifest itself henceforward, as I shall show, in the shape of science, and at stated periods, which periods I may at once announce answer to the decline of orthodoxies. Greek science first manifested herself towards Solon's time by ridiculing anthropomorphism, when a certain learned man told the Hellênes that if their horses had gods they would certainly have the shape of horses. Now anthropomorphism was the special form of Hellenic orthodoxy. And western science may be dated from the completion of Roman orthodoxy. A third instance is the birth of Galileo, one year after the Council of Trent. Such dates are the only visible signs on an otherwise impenetrable surface; below it are the gradual developments of orthodoxies and the first dawning rays of science. Their existence continues invisible and silent until such a time as I pointed out above, when the explosion of an orthodoxy creates new eras in the history of science.

At such a time therefore the social elements undergo a radical revulsion; they are no longer the hired or the willing slaves of orthodoxy, but the freed handmaids of science. It is needless then to try and conceal the fact that at all times of their co-existence science and orthodoxy have been pitiless rivals. During the longer or shorter period, as the case may be, of a sacerdotal decadence, the community is steeped in a revolutionary condition that propagates the most varied scenes and characters, comic at times, but mostly tragic. From each side may be heard the cries of appeal against oppression and injustice. Here a warning finger is pointed at the yawning abyss into which disbelievers are casting themselves; there a voice is telling of alluring advantages to be gained from knowledge and of the happy goal toward which science will lead them. The orthodox side predicts disorganized communities, deserted

temples in which the gods are outraged, iniquity and crime unfurling their standard, and seducers and seduced going to everlasting perdition. Freethinkers, the wise, as Greeks called them, the men of science, in fact, undertake to dispel the terrors of the other world; they rouse men to freedom, to personal efforts, to instruction which elevates the mind, to labour which sweetens and adorns life, to thrift which insures the welfare of the family, to the exercise of civil rights which maintain the healthy condition of states, finally to peace, the greatest of all human boons, which has always been broken into and disturbed by orthodoxies. These are the apparently justified arguments on both sides.

At such a time of its existence, orthodoxy assumes oppressive or at least coercive rights, and keeps the people in a state of ignorance for their better subjection. Science assumes impious rights, a principle of dissolution and immorality that sets its face against religion. But remembering that it is the common element of orthodoxies that breathes through this self-same science, a clear, unprejudiced mind will soon see that the disappearance of orthodoxies cannot affect religion any more than the rise and fall of a wave affects the existence of the ocean; such a mind will detect in the antagonism of social elements merely the prevailing struggle for existence upon which nature continually draws for fresh indemnities. Science and orthodoxy must therefore be enemies; but the actual territory of religion will ever remain neutral, and on it men can meet and be friends. Orthodoxy alone is the obstacle; quite lately only the Latins and the Greeks declared that they could not agree on matters of orthodoxy. Science, on the contrary, draws men of one country, and different countries, together; for she works with her reason, and founds her convictions upon personally acquired evidence. Her terms are not stereotyped; for she continually and liberally alters and corrects her forms. Science is exactly the same at Athens, at Berlin, and at Rome.

The result is, that wherever science is flourishing orthodoxy is decaying; they both walk at an equal pace in

opposite directions. On the day when science has surrounded herself with all the elements of a community, local orthodoxy will vanish straightway. This is what happened to polytheism, to whose ruin Greek science contributed more largely than dawning Christianity. In these days nearly every orthodoxy is in a state of decay, without being on the eve of extinction. Brâhminism in India is losing ground before advancing European science and her application. The same may be said of the Hellenic orthodoxy, of the Latin, and even of the Protestant semi-orthodoxies of the Germanic nations. The Musulman Churches, notwithstanding the contempt for science they have implanted into their communities, are daily made aware of their decreasing power both in Constantinople and at Cairo. Russia has in this respect been the most spared of any country in the world, owing to the Turanian origin of its inhabitants, and to the union of the spiritual and the temporal in the person of the czar; but the day is not far distant when this condition too will be swept away for ever by the universal wave.

The downfall of orthodoxies is more or less hastened by internal causes, whereof race is also one. There are indeed some human races with which science makes but little headway, whose religious notions even are of a very low order. In the north-eastern portion of Russia Christianity is simply idolatry, and science has not yet found her way thither. Not so however in the south-east of that empire; nor is the difference solely due to the vicinity of civilized nations in the latter case; it is chiefly due to the difference of race, the east being inhabited by Turanian races, and the west by Âryans. The fellahs of Egypt and the tribes on the south of that kingdom will long after this retain their orthodoxies, since they are unfitted for science. And likewise the entire south of Hindustan, peopled by Ethiopian or Dravidian races, whose intellect is as unlikely to grasp the theory of gravitation as the neutral and indiscernible theory of Brâhm. Whilst, on the contrary, the progressing and especially the Âryan races, which are headed by France,

England, and Germany, all exert themselves in trying to shake off their respective orthodoxies, to smooth out all the time-inflicted wrinkles of disparities, to unite themselves in science and freedom, and to share the advantages thereof. We find that the example set by these countries is followed by a number of other nations of the same origin or of mixed races, and the flood which has undermined the bulwarks of their orthodoxies is likely to search out all the corners of the earth by-and-by.

One can easily understand that orthodoxies are always forsaken by the upper, that is to say by the enlightened classes, for knowledge which snaps the chains of orthodox bondage also raises men into the highest classes. But science also possesses teaching as a means of action, and the application of her theories corresponds with the sacred rites. By means of those two roads she travels from the higher classes to those who from circumstances have not been raised above a certain level; and by degrees she reaches men of the lowliest condition. The tactics of science are advance; of orthodoxy, retreat. The fixedness of orthodox formulas is a third reason for desertion. It is that rigidity which prevents it taking cognisance of the social transformations that are going on in the outside world in theory and in the application of the morals. For instance, the first chapters of Genesis were intended as a foundation to the Catholic doctrine; it was taught in every church that God had created the world in six days, by which six solar days were understood. When science proved that the formation alone of the earth had taken a much longer time, the interpretation fell to the ground. Adam was preserved as the primordial trunk of humanity, and humanity was estimated at a certain antiquity: but the inscriptions in Egypt removed that adopted epoch by several centuries; geological discoveries relegated it into a still more distant past and, in accordance with philology, proved that Adam and Eve, or rather the personages represented by those names, were myths instead of realities. However we may search the book of Genesis, it will never be anything else than an

obscure record, which, so far from contributing any enlightening ray to science, is itself in dire want of all the light afforded by science.

Another example. Morals are being acknowledged like science. The universality of their dictated laws has been set forth; they no longer admit of any law of exception. All philosophers consider it the normal state of man and woman to be united, because their union insures the duration of species; it is considered a deviation from nature's and morality's laws to multiply Buddhist communities of celibacy, which have made up entire cities in central Asia and invaded Siamese society. And yet the Council of Trent has declared the celibate condition to be superior to the married state, and anathematized all deniers. Hence our divided opinions with regard to convents and monastic life, and the diversity of opinion between Catholics and Protestants. It is very evident that that article from the Council of Trent will have to be revoked, or that it will fall into disuse, if the philosophic doctrine triumphs. Of course this orthodoxical point does not affect Christianity, since it is not observed by Protestants nor by the eastern Church, whose priests marry. This fact again shows that the immovability of dogmas is one cause in the downfall of local Churches. This rigidity characterizes and eventually wrecks all orthodoxies; and yet any modification on their part would be a contradiction of their principles, and once more end in ruin.

No form of faith, once it is framed as an orthodoxy, can escape from producing extreme consequences, productive of others or of exaggerated social results. I might quote endless examples, but two or three will suffice. The contemplation of truth is the most perfect condition of the soul. Turn this contemplation or conception into a principle of orthodoxy with its accompanying consequences, and you will create contemplative societies which will prescribe those conditions that are most favourable to contemplation, among which will be the motionlessness of the body; and in India you would find men who, in order to obtain that incompetence of motion, would get themselves tied hand and foot to the

trunks of trees and there spend their lives. The excess of eating and drinking impair the functions of the brain: quite a true principle this, which leads to abstinence and asceticism. And this, considered as a principle and applied in all severity, sends hermits into desert places, on to steep rocks, into crumbling ruins, and makes the white dervishes of Constantinople spin round on one foot in a state of ecstasy. Those are not aberrations, they are consequences very logically deduced from very human principles, but warped and condensed by orthodoxy: otherwise those penitents would be looked upon and banished as madmen by their Church; whereas it tolerates them, often praises them, and sometimes even elevates them into saints. So much for the practice.

When doctrine has become orthodox it follows the same law. Here is an example. The fire had been lighted by the friction of two pieces of wood, purposely chosen and appropriately carved, one with a little groove, the other into a point. The man who prepared them for the first time was a great artist, who transmitted his invention to his successors, and was called like them *par excellence* the "carpenter" (*twaṣṭri*). From realizing that this first fire was produced by him, he came justly to be called the father. Then the theory, taking hold of facts, found that the igneous principle dwells in vegetation, and thence traced its origin to the sun. Henceforth the fire on the altar was said to have two fathers, one heavenly or divine, the other human. When the theory of fire became the theory of Christ, that is, of the anointed (*akta*, in Latin *unctus*), and after having long dwelt in Asia, it journeyed thence to Europe, the former carpenter took his Semitic name of Jusuf or Joseph, and lived afresh in the foster-father of Mary's Son. Catholic orthodoxy having consecrated this personage, who scarcely plays any part in eastern Christianity, Joseph there obtained dedicative honours: altars were raised to him, and communities of men and women specially deputed to his service.

There comes a moment therefore in which religious dogmas, turning into orthodoxy, begin to lose their original

theoretic value. With the lapse of time and the multiplying consequences of the fixed dogma, the primordial significance becomes blurred, and finally disappears entirely. Then rise up fantastic conceptions or ideal beings, to whom is attributed a supernatural existence and a sovereign power over the universe and humanity. This is the history of the entire ancient and modern paganism. When science has reached a height from which she can survey these figures created by orthodoxies, she either denies their existence or neglects them like phantoms of a popular imagination ; and this from an absence of any clue to their methods. She strikes out a new path for herself, though not within the regions of reality, and without entirely losing sight of this reality, she walks farther and farther towards abstract formulas on which the imagination has lost all hold. Then when these formulas are compared with their equivalents, the sacred figures, these latter are stigmatised as worthless by scientific men, who in their turn are impious in the eyes of orthodoxy. Yet sacred figures are never again renewed, whilst science is continually being renewed ; in her progress she drives them into an adoring but decreasing circle of believers, and by-and-by, when orthodoxies are all exploded and vanished, their subjects, the gods, will be gone too.

From the facts which science has lately unearthed, I have been able to set forth the laws to which orthodoxies conform from the hour of their birth till their end. These laws do not in any degree digress from the world's general laws ; they are but an application to a particular order of phenomena. They call for neither blame nor praise ; they are what they are ; and humanity conforms to them without the wish or the power of evading them. When a man or a nation drops an orthodoxy, it is likewise the fulfilling of the law : a protracted adherence to it when reason dictates otherwise is abnormal. For this reason religious persecutions are as fruitless as cruel, and martyrs have always had the best of their executioners. Orthodoxies are free to establish themselves if they can, to diffuse themselves, but not by violence. Sciences have the same rights

and the same duties, since their points of departure and their attributes are the same. Still, orthodoxies and religion are two different things. The latter always remains an everlasting human home; it is approached by the human highway, open and free to all, uncoercing, unrestraining—a highway that ought to lead travellers to a possession of self, of peace, and of freedom.

CHAPTER XIV.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE. I.—THE METHOD.

If the comparative philology and history of dogmas, symbols, and rites disclose the primordial unity of religion, and disentangle from its various forms the foreign elements whence emanated those differences, there will remain but a simple fact, whose nature, production, and causes should be studied. This study would end in a complete theory of religion. We have set forth the fact by itself according to the most ancient and authentic records; we know that religion is a metaphysical formula, that morals and politics entered into it later, that they are not essential parts, and that they varied according to time and place, whilst the religious element remained unchanged. It is equally well proved that in its transit from the Âryan race to inferior races, religion in all its actual elements suffered losses which were only due to the physical and moral constitution of those populations. The present facility for travelling, with its teachings, the discovery and the translation into European languages of sacred books and authentic texts, above all, the thorough knowledge of India and Persia,—have in this nineteenth century revealed ancient and modern religions which bear on ours as essential causes and effects. It is granted to every man of learning to take up those beliefs in their present condition, to trace their past history, to see them growing one out of the other, adapting themselves to foreign influences, and, lastly, choosing their own medium. The application of analysis to this order of facts detaches and eliminates the elements which have joined themselves to religion, according as they rise up in the course of history, and places us face to face with the

primordial fact which we can henceforth investigate and scientifically appreciate.

Three written monuments must have greatly attracted the attention of scholars: the Genesis of the Jews, the *Avesta* of the Persians, and the *Vêda* of the Indians. Recent analytical efforts have proved something which had been long suspected: that Genesis, granting even it was left untouched at the time of Ezra, is not a radically primitive book; that not only have several of its chapters been taken from different and opposite sources, but that it is simply an abridged reproduction of the Âryan traditions of central Asia. Those traditions are indeed to be found more complete and explicit in the sacred books of Persia, and partly even in the *Vêda*, where they are supposed to belong to the race that composed those books; whilst in Genesis they are generally foreign to the sons of Israel. Genesis, from a scientific point of view, therefore ranks secondary among those which our real forefathers have bequeathed to us. Its relative importance dwindles still more when we consider the religious problem; for there is hardly any religion to be found in Genesis, whilst the *Avesta* and the *Vêda* are filled with it. The Elohims, whence came the idea of Allah, are not a metaphysical conception; Jehovah (Yaveh), such as He is depicted, instead of furnishing the universe with a great theory, with order and law, exercises arbitrary power and performs miracles; there is not between Him and Elohim as great a distance as has been supposed. If the Jews received from central Asia the religious idea as ethnological traditions, they conceived it according to the natural ability of their race, and they have stripped the primitive theory of the metaphysical character with which the Âryans had invested it. It is not surprising therefore that the Founder of Christianity intended by His own doctrine, not so much an extension of Judaism, as the re-establishment of a theory "hidden since ancient times."

Since the Hebrew books are now historically interpreted by those of Asia, we may regard the latter as the light of our footsteps. Anquetil-Duperron and Eugène Burnouf

in France, Spiegel in Germany, and Haug in the part of India which is inhabited by the Parsees, are those whose writings have most contributed to the knowledge of the *Avesta*. H. Wilson, Langlois, Roth, Max Müller, J. Muir, Weber, Benfey, Aufrecht, and a great number of other orientalists have made us acquainted with the literature of the *Vêdas*. From the varied works of these scholars we gather that the book of the Persians, notwithstanding the exceeding antiquity of some of its portions, answers in its doctrine to an age subsequent upon that of the Indian hymns. In fact, it already exhibits a close connexion between the religious theory and the social and political elements of the Iranian civilization. Whereas in the *Vêda* this connexion does not exist, or at any rate, only in its earliest stage; there are not even any separate castes, unless it be in two or three hymns more recent than the others. Moreover the metaphysical theory in it is not completed; it only indicates the road to its formation. Polytheism, which preceded the great pantheistic doctrine of the Brâhmins, reigns nearly all through it. This latter is only detected in psalms composed by men whose intellect is eminently above that of others, and these men themselves belonged to colleges of priests where these questions were discussed. In the *Avesta* the doctrine has decided formulas, and their authorship is attributed to Zoroaster. Therefore in its groundwork it answers to the age of Brâhminism, with which it engages in a controversy unknown to the singers of the *Vêda*. The final analysis must therefore be directed upon the *Vêda* if we wish to understand the nature of the primitive religion, and obtain correct dates as to its origin and formation. Now the Vêdic studies, which were only commenced in 1833 with the specimens of hymns which Rosen published, are now-a-days ripe enough to admit of this triple problem.

The birth of religion is no longer a mystery. It is a phenomenon of general psychology which refutes all supposition of a miracle, or, in other words, of any local and extraordinary intervention of a power superior to man. That which cer-

tain religions, and among them Zoroaster's doctrine and even the Brâhmin, call revelation, can be understood only in the sense in which the author of the fourth gospel understood it; it is "the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." But the import of this formula must be restricted, because the primitive theory was conceived by men of Âryan race, transmitted to other men of lesser attributes, not however by its own unaided powers.

This revelation takes place in the individual mind of each one among us; the authors of the *Vêda* maintain this twenty times over. Not only do they speak of themselves as "authors of the gods," "authors of the sacrifice," creators of symbols and sacred formulas, but by identifying with their proper thoughts the thinking being, with their individual life the common principle of life, and with the fire, considered as universal, all the phenomena of heat and motion, they feel and they proclaim that they themselves discovered those truths. As a matter of fact the philological and critical efforts applied to Indian texts, thanks to which we have succeeded in arranging those hymns into a chronological succession, show that the oldest of those hymns contain but a small particle of the fundamental doctrine, and enable us to watch its unfolding from year to year. Now this exclusion means religion itself, since it is this theory, more or less adapted to its mediums, which constitutes the groundwork of all posterior religions.

As I said before, scholars are confronted by a psychological phenomenon. This phenomenon is of the highest order, since it is the true action, both primordial and perpetual, of reason. It must only be remembered however that this phenomenon is not realized in its plenitude except by Âryans; it has escaped other races, and does so still partly. The explanation of a being's absolute unity of mind, of life, is to a negro or to a redskin the wording of empty phrases. The non-Âryan races of Arabia, of Egypt, and of all the extreme regions of Asia are also constituted in such a way that their mind has been denied that faculty of analysis which is the attribute of the white man; that

is to say, of Âryans only. We must ever bear in mind that the operations of the intellect, which are the theme of philosophers, wholly and solely apply to the Âryan,—to the adult, perfected, and civilized Âryan.

Observation indeed has brought to view as many varieties of intellect among the various races as there are physical conformations. It is the faculty of analysis to define the varieties of the intellect more or less, just as it also defines the essential difference between man and the lower animals. With many the intellect lies dormant; with others it exists in an embryo state; with superior animals it is already far developed. Some animals are just one step below man—man of the lowest race, of course, a race which speaks rudimentary languages, counts up to three, and worships a stick. Can he be said to have a notion of God? Verily he has, but a vastly inferior one to that of the celestial sultan of the Arabs. The Âryan alone has been able to conceive being, thought, and life in their absolute unity. He is therefore the true author of religion, and his earliest metaphysical book is the *Vêda*.

The series of hymns which constitutes this book shows us how the theory developed itself to our forefathers for a period of several centuries. The labour accomplished by meditation, teaching, and discussion slowly shaped those defined formulas. The initial action was the contemplation of nature around; after which came reflection. The Âryan set about in search of a connecting link between the phenomena which had struck upon his senses. The suggestion of strength, of power, close at hand he connected with these phenomena, and thus he conceived gods. Then as he went on detecting the full mutual bearings of things, he realized that those gods were the various denominations of simpler forces, and the number of the gods decreased. Finally, the natural bent of the method lead those minds towards a point of unity, and taught the authors of the hymns that the invisible forces in the universe could, by the mind's action, be concentrated into one single force, of which the others were the varied aspects.

Thus the earliest investigation of nature led the white men of central Asia, by progressive steps, to conceive the One Being, which henceforth ceased to be an hypothesis, and assumed in their eyes as much reality as the things which were its attributes. Its reality was even greater and its power was of course something supernatural; for if the present phenomena are its creation, those of the past are likewise its creation, and those of the future must also spring from its infinite sources. As time and space, both witnesses of these phenomenal productions, are limitless, the power of him who was called *Savitri*, that is to say, *producer*, was conceived as infinite.

But it must be remembered that the point of departure of this theory having originated in pure and simple observations, there was no reason why our ancestors should place the seat of power elsewhere than in the things which manifested it to their eyes; and by the very simplicity and purity of their observations they were forced to recognise God in every attribute of natural phenomena.

The Semites could not elevate themselves to such a conception, because that race of men which is wanting in the power to analyse has never been capable of following a method of conceptions; notwithstanding all their apparent exaltation of the Divine power, they have never made any stride beyond anthropomorphism.

The God of the early Christians in no way resembled that of the Semites, nor the Yaveh of the sons of Israel; His nature was far more metaphysical; had it not been so, the theory of Christ and of His double nature would have been absolutely impossible. Later on, the Latin doctors and the philosophers of the West drew more upon the Judaic doctrine, and gave an import to the dogma of the creation such as it never had with the Âryans of Asia. These doctors and philosophers could not see why, if we readily imagine Allah in the solitude of his palace, and separated from the world over which he exercises a sovereign and irresistible power, it is less easy to conceive the absolute Being making something out of nothing, only because the meaning of

nothing has no equivalent representative in our minds. Creation, as it was understood by the Indians and the Persians, was a production in the Latin sense of the word; that is to say, an act by which the universal Agent of the world caused the shapes of things to appear and disappear in turns. The human action, which also has the power to produce forms, though not to create substance, could well serve as a type or a point of departure for the idea which represented the production of the world; thus the Âryan maintained his theory to the very last.

The vigour of mind in our ancestors, as is evinced in their writings, the sacred books of central Asia, places them far above other peoples. As barren as the books of the Bible, especially the oldest, are of metaphysic, and therefore of method and classification of their ideas, as well strung together are those of the holy psalmists of Asia, arranged as they are with clearness and circumspection, and brimming with bursts of joy at every fresh revelation of truth.

If this was the method whose application engendered the religious theory of the Âryans, the theory which they so thoroughly worked out and transmitted to us in its formulas, nothing leads one to doubt that other races attempted the same thing, and that each, without the other's assistance, conceived a religion. This we can even prove. There are some low races, in far away regions, out of the beaten track, and shut off from other nations, whose religions are deprived of every shape or degree of metaphysic, and which only hinge on the one word idol worship. The savage does not look upon his idol as a symbol, as some means for recalling an abstract or ideal notion to his mind; the carved idol is his god, sometimes appropriate to the race, but more often to the family, and nearly always a personal god which each man carves to his taste. And yet after all is said and done, we are certain that if this man had given no thought to surrounding nature, which dispenses all his joys and sorrows, and had not regarded it as the throne of all sovereign and invisible powers, he certainly would not have chosen a piece of wood, or a stone, or a strip of coarse

linen as the concentration of his notions of vastness and strength. There are some exclusive lands to the west of Texas, inhabited by coloured men, who of their own accord retreat before the European. They have latterly invented a new divinity, *Santa Lluvia* (holy rain), who they say is their enemy and the protector of the white man. Now it is a fact, that while they occupy a country no rain falls to make the soil fruitful, and that the white man no sooner settles there with his agricultural implements, than the rain comes and waters the surrounding country. Cæsar Daly, who is a witness of this fact, explains it by the ardent heat which exhales from pastures that have for centuries been hardened by the trampling of the herds and which keep the clouds suspended above, whereas the cultivated soil absorbs the heat and draws down the rain. So the native, even when he knows the causes and their remedies, despondently submits to the power which his mind has created into an enemy. He began like the Âryan, only his analysing faculties were very limited; he stopped short after the very first step, and sank again into the material from which a sudden impulse seemed ready to rouse him.

The old Chinese and Tatar religions were certainly as far above idol worship as the yellow races are above negroes and redskins. The peoples from extreme Asia had, before the advent of Buddhism, taken for their doctrine a polytheism which still exists, but in no way resembles that of the Indians or Germans or ancient Greeks; for the yellow peoples regarded their polytheism as the perfection of religion, whilst the gods of those other nations were the heritage of their forefathers at a time when theory was in its first infancy. There is no doubt as to the Hellenic migrations having quitted central Asia before the time of the *Vêda*. Those of the north-west of Europe probably departed still earlier, at a time when the plurality of the divine powers was the common but provisory creed of our race. It was the same with the Latins.

But when the great secession came about, which divided the last Âryans into two groups, one of which betook itself

to India and the other towards the south-east, they were both on the verge of reaching the goal of their method, for they had grasped the dogma of unity. Nevertheless the whole Vêdic period had to elapse before the Indians could rise to the conception of Brahmâ, producer of the world; and after this lapse of several centuries the last step in the metaphysical abstraction conducted them to that other neutral, absolute, and inactive Brâhm, a unity superior to the being, superior to power, and from which "the universe is suspended like a row of pearls on a thread."

The same kind of analytical reasoning was worked out by the south-eastern Âryans, who were the Iranians, that means, the Medes and the Persians. After having practically adopted what has been called the dualism of Ormuzd and Ahriman, a dualism which is really identical with the Indian dogma of Brahmâ the producer, they worked out their theory as far as to conceive the absolute and neutral principle, which they described as inactive (*akarana*).

Therefore when we attribute to the Âryan race, and especially to the Iranians, the discovery of the metaphysical theory, the sole basis of religion, we exclude none of the peoples belonging to the same race, neither do we ignore the men of inferior races. But facts prove that this theory was not the complete one with any nation but the two great ones of Asia, who felt no fear for the consequences attendant on this method. The people of other races, after having entered upon the same road, only advanced so far as their physical and intellectual abilities permitted them. Some came to a standstill after the very first step. Others set to work upon generalization, and found that the great universe could be perfectly well represented by the possession of a full notion of power; but since they could not realize a metaphysical notion in its naked form, they made a god to their mind, and invested him with a regal but purely human majesty. The groundwork of this method was alike for all peoples, except in so far as its modes of application varied with the respective degrees of mental and physical constitution.

It is generally admitted now that the Âryan nation, as a race, was the last born, whatever may have been the conditions of its birth; also that it was preceded by inferior races, some of which have probably disappeared altogether. A certain fact is, for instance, that India was peopled by coloured men when the Âryans arrived; and likewise when the Âryans made their appearance in the West, Europe had been long inhabited. If the Kelts are Âryans, the Basques and Iberians are not. Neither do they seem to have been Âryans who raised the old sepulchral monuments in Brittany, Africa, and other countries. Formerly also the Buddhist missionaries of Samarkand went as far as the New World, and settled down in Mexico; but the representatives of the Âryan race did certainly not mingle their blood very much with that of the savage inhabitants of those countries. It is not admissible, from a scientific point of view, that the men of what is called the arid age were of the race of Indians, Persians, or Hellênes. A consistent supposition is however, that all those more or less ancient populations had made for themselves some rough structure of religion, and had raised themselves more or less in the order of ideas, before the Âryan theory dawned upon this earth. But science is not forced to admit that those rough structures were the foundations of that theory. In principle, the rest of mankind have the same intellectual faculties as the Âryans, only in the latter they are more fully developed. They alone lifted nature's veil; they alone drew their metaphysical knowledge from her revealed spectacle. As a fact, the sacred books of Asia prove to us that the Âryans created that theory; they did not borrow it.

The transmission as well as the birth of religious ideas reduces itself therefore into a question of method. As the low primitive races did not create the theory, they could transmit to their successors nothing but their rough structures; but these successors, in receiving them and submitting them to a surer and more advanced method, would have transformed them into something quite new. Such a legacy would then have been illusory and unacceptable

to the heirs, as it is inadmissible in the eyes of science. The natural hierarchy of human races always asserts itself again in their works, and especially in the noblest of all works, religion. The coarse divinities of Chinese or Dravidian polytheism are above idols, without being their successors. Again, these divinities were not the predecessors of the Indian deities, which deities proceeded out of the Vêdic period, and were of so mobile a nature as probably to have assimilated with and disappeared in the great Brâhmin unity. The more one analyses those facts which are now so numerous and established, the more one feels convinced that the disparities of religion do not spring from any fault in the method, but from the grade to which peoples have attained in their applications.

Since the Âryans brought the great religious theory into the world, it has been aided by the force of things in its conquest of the whole of human kind. That which one race is unable to create for itself is likely to be supplied by another, partly at least. Thus the missionaries of the different Âryan religions that went among the yellow, red, and black skins, did not find them altogether rebellious. The example of Tibet converted to Buddhism shows us a Mongol, almost ferocious nation won over by the teaching and the gentleness of the Indian priests. It was the same in Ceylon, as may be seen by several beautiful Buddhist narratives that are translated into European tongues. The *Ethiopica* of Heliodorus, of which I have before spoken, is another instance, and is, in fact, testified by the Christian missionaries who dwell among coloured peoples; we have been told by them time after time that their influence on these people is purely moral, and that their intellects are almost dead to dogma and theology. On the other hand, it is a well known fact that the mingling of two unmatched races causes the extinction of the faultier one. When a white man marries a negress, their child is a mulatto; when two mulattoes of equal blood marry, their child is whiter than they. This fact is the application of a general law in nature which presides over the production

of hybrids, a law by which hybridity always tends towards disappearance, so that mixed forms return to the types from which they sprang. Now, the physical constitution of living beings is parallel with their psychological constitution; so that the intermarriage, even in equal proportions, of inferior races with perfect ones makes these former fit for receiving the doctrine, and in time wipes out all traces of their identity. Marriages are therefore the most effectual promoters of the intellectual and moral elevation of non-Âryan races, more so than preaching and teaching. If by the fusion of races the lower order of men should ever succeed in acquiring the abilities they lack, the fundamental theory might then be understood and accepted by the whole human race and consigned to the protectorate of one truly universal Church. At this present moment however we are far removed from such a possibility, neither is the present and existing condition of religion likely to advance us in that cause.

In whatever light we confront the problem of the birth, the development, and the transmission of religions, it always resolves itself into a question of method that is more or less well understood and applied. This method is no secret, since we may watch it at its work in the oldest record of our race, in the Indian hymns, and follow it up in its consequences and applications until the present. As a summing up, we will say it is composed of three successive actions of the mind: the observation of natural facts; their generalization, that is to say, their reduction into more or less extending and numerous ideal unities; and, finally, that rational induction which beyond the phenomena perceives the real and permanent indwelling being.

The absence of the two latter actions amounts to idol worship; an unfinished generalization ends in a plurality of gods. When the three operations are performed in their fullest extent, the metaphysical theory, whose base is the oneness of God, that is to say, of substance, of the creative action, and of law, there rises out of the midst of the people something that is called religion; all the rest, *viz.* worship

and symbols, is the consequence and the expression of that theory.

The reader who is accustomed to the speculations of philosophy will have no difficulty in understanding and admitting that the method from which religion sprang is precisely the one which science has always followed and always will; for the methods of the human mind are neither numerous nor varied. If we omit mathematical methods, which are solely applicable to abstractions, and cannot help us to discover by themselves either the substances of beings or the causes of phenomena, the other processes of the mind reduce themselves into those I have just described. It is to the regular and exclusive application of the two former, which are the only ones ever used in sciences of observation, that the lately accomplished progress is due; *viz.* the progress in physics, chemistry, and in all the branches of natural sciences, and, lastly, in the definition of the laws which apply to human thoughts, and which have inappropriately been called psychology.

The third process of the mind is proper to metaphysics; through its medium principally does science derive its bearing upon religion. God indeed is not observable, neither is He an abstraction; in fact, observation never reaches either the reality or the being, it only discovers their transitory forms, appearances, and moods. The least grain of philosophic reasoning and simple reflection will tell us that neither chemistry nor anatomy can disclose to us the inner nature of the body or of living beings. However we may subdivide them, the minutest particles are only outwardly visible, they never disclose the substance which constitutes them. Therefore when a man advances his opinion on this substance, he performs the part of metaphysician, and thereby precludes his being chemist or naturalist. The same may be said of the psychologist: however great be his attributes as a spiritualist, he readily confesses his inability to grasp the naked substance of his being; he perceives only the phenomena of his thoughts and the rays, not the nucleus of his soul. The actions of

our will, which is sometimes regarded as the revelation of the substance, are confined by the same restrictions; for those actions have no power to create beings, they merely produce phenomena. Were it otherwise, this very consciousness would reveal to us the absolute substance, and we should then be God, which is of course preposterous. Hence there is nothing in common between psychology and metaphysics. This latter is composed of a separate order of lofty conceptions, whose object is not arbitrary, abstract, or ideal, but real and infinite, and concordant with the sacred theory.

The scientific methods are therefore identical with those used by our ancestors of the Oxus when they conceived and founded religion, and up to that period religion and science are synonymous terms. It is indeed not without reason that the book which contains the oldest religious theory is called *Vêda*, which means *science*, for that theory was nothing less than the complete science of ancient times. How is it then that religion and science are now-a-days synonymous terms for reciprocal exclusion? It is because of the laws which science has discovered in connexion with religions, and of which we shall presently have an opportunity of speaking.

The whole of nature proceeds in the display of its living forces by successive periods, and not by continuance. A plant is not always growing; it sleeps and wakes according to seasons, to the alternation of day and night, and to rain and sunshine. Children and young animals attain their full size after alternate periods of growth and repose; and on the same conditions are the intellectual faculties evolved. If, instead of confining ourselves to individuals, we contemplate species, we find the same phenomena reproduced on a larger scale; for species, which consist of individuals, conform of course to their laws. Theoretically then we are led to believe that man's mind takes possession of his nature, not all at once, nor at the end of a continuous labour, but by periods, between which there are more or less prolonged spells of repose.

We find that history quite agrees with this theory. Everybody knows from what epoch modern science dates, or better, at what time each particular science began which we now cultivate. Some are quite recent, like chemistry, and the sciences of languages and religions; others, like physics and astronomy, are older; a few belong to even more remote periods: but they all first saw the light of day in the Âryan antiquity, and principally among the Greeks. It was in Solon's days that the spirit of independence first dawned upon the West; its advent coincided with that of democracy, of which that great man was the earliest organizer. After an initial period, during which it had to fight against polytheism and at the same time against the Hellenic aristocracies, it won its position in Europe by the death of Socrates, which acted as a consecration. And now, in the full possession of its freedom, it grew under Plato, acquired its general formulas, its rules, and methods from Aristotle, and thenceforth entered into the civilization of the Alexandrians. Their last compatriot, Proclus, took up the study that we are pursuing at this moment, but died unfortunately before the accomplishment of his task. After the edict of Justinian, which, in 529, closed all the free pagan schools, science fell into a deep slumber all through the dark night of the Christian and barbarous middle ages. The return of Hellenism however once more stirred up that spirit of liberty and love of science that harmonized so well with the natural instincts and propensities of the tribes of the North who had found their way into the very centre of Italy. Vainly did the politics of State and Church fight against science; but the scholars and the learned men first, and then the people, were quite determined to make a resolute effort in the defence of its young life. They fully realized that the old ways of thinking required an invigorating infusion of science, and that science alone could supply man with the sceptre of power which would firmly establish his dominion over nature.

The chief characteristic of modern science, from Solon's

days to ours, is analysis. Since the day that Xenophon declared that "if horses made gods for themselves, they would give them the shape of horses," it was understood that the whole intellectual labour which had produced polytheism was to be recalled, and its place supplied by analysis. At once the different orders of natural phenomena and ideas separated from each other, and became successively the object of particular sciences which were then created. Socrates led the Greeks into the way of psychology. Plato, his disciple, disclosed the inaugural elements of metaphysics, and applied analysis to morals and to political institutions. The Pythagoreans gave themselves up to exact sciences. Aristotle created and finished all by himself the science of methods in the books which are called *Analytics;* he founded meteorology, the physics of the globe, simple and comparative anatomy, natural history, and gave of the soul, considered as a living and thinking principle, a theory which has never been surpassed. His methods, which were taught and practised after him, not only in his school, but in the entire Hellenic world, gave rise in Alexandria, in Tarsus, at Antioch, at Pergamos, at Athens, and elsewhere to scientific investigations and applications, which nothing could arrest but the dissolution of the empire, Christian asceticism, and the invasion of the northern nations.

When sciences reared their heads once more among moderns, at the time when the Turks effected their entrance into Constantinople, at the time of the discovery of the New World and of the Reformation, they remained separate, and, so far from any tendency to mingle, they engendered by their divisions new sciences. To each was assigned an appropriate domain; and when it was clearly found what was the vital object of each, it was thought expedient to apply to each order of ideas a precise method and such proceedings as were most applicable. Thus the whole of nature, physical and moral, became as it were a vast territory, of which each particle was explored and cultivated by the ablest men with the most efficient instruments. Now-a-days if a chemist were to apply his study to the phenomena

of life, he would soon detect his trespass, or be made aware of it by the owner of that domain, the physiologist. He who investigates the chemical composition of the sun by means of the spectrum knows at what stage of his study astronomy and physics step in, nor does he ever confound science with fact. Just so with the moralist, the psychologist, and the metaphysician, whose respective studies of individual and social life may meet and converge, but never mingle.

It is quite evident therefore that analysis rules the whole action of modern society, and that we are living in a second period of science. The preceding period was the Hellenic, which from Solon to Justinian lasted no less than one thousand years; our present one barely comprises four hundred years. But since we have added new analytical proceedings and means of investigation to those practised by the ancients, we are naturally in a position to make larger strides, or at any rate to advance farther into science than they ever did. The reader will bear in mind that this is the manifestation of that power of analysis which is the brilliant characteristic of our race. China has been at a standstill for several thousand years; not a step has she advanced even since the adoption of Buddhism. The Semites have translated and carried from the East into the West a small portion of the Indian and Hellenic science, but have added nothing thereto. Whilst the Indians have not ceased to learn, and ever since the English Government has established a regular system of teaching among them, Brâhmins and Parsees flock to the schools, make themselves familiar with our sciences, cast off their antiquated institutions, travel to Europe, and soon will be like ourselves.

This second period of science, which is ours, owes its origin and its elements to the first one. It transmitted to us the name of Pythagoras, which is known throughout Europe; Euclid, who is still the greatest geometrician that ever lived; Aristotle, the father of sciences of observation and the earliest advocate of analysis. As for the middle

ages, they covered the period of repose between Hellenic and modern science. In the remote past there is another period of repose, whose duration it is impossible to determine, a period which preceded Solon and those who were called wise, that is to say, scholars. It answers to the formation of Hellenic communities, as our middle ages are the incubation of modern communities. This period, again, was preceded in the Âryan race by a very active and fertile mental labour, whose monuments are the great sacred texts of Asia. Those texts are scientific, because they were the base of the religious institution; but they are at the same time scientific texts on the same premises as those of Plato, for they contain the theory which preceded the Hellenic period of science, and themselves proclaim in a hundred passages that they contain science. When we consider that this theory was obtained by our ancestors by means of the same methods that we employ at this day, it must strike us that the theoretical part of the primordial religion represents the whole science of the Âryans, such as it was in those ancient days, and that consequently religion is the earliest form of science.

When one compares modern science with that of the ancient Hellênes, we see that the only thing which they lacked was that superior degree of analysis and those analytical processes which we possess. Again, when we compare the Hellenic science with that contained in the *Vêda* and *Avesta*, we feel convinced that the former is far more analytic than the latter, and that there is between them the same reference as between the Greek and the modern.

Now here again is an exceedingly simple law of the human mental development, a law which chiefly rests upon the comparative study of religions and sciences. Both have a common element, which is the method; and this method is nothing more nor less than the regular application of the mind to its object. The difference arises from the fact that the processes employed by this method have become more and more analytical. Taking it just as it is in the sacred books of Asia, the theory of the universe

presents itself under the form of a definite synthesis; but on studying the elements of this theory, the names of the gods, their nature, their meaning, their symbols and rites, and the sum of those simple and non-figured expressions which fill the *Vêda*, we find that this synthesis, whose centre is the absolute Being, was preceded by analysis, and by a distinct perception of this world's phenomena.

There can be no doubt as to this work having covered a lengthy period; for not alone are the Indian hymns in our possession the work of several centuries, but they themselves often allude to doctrines, to ideal conceptions, and to rites whose invention they attribute to very remote ancestors. Therefore these books are not exactly primitive, that phase of science which they set forth is not the earliest one; and we are quite justified in conjecturing others that have bequeathed neither monument nor recollection. We cannot picture to ourselves the first impression made upon man by nature. The nearest approach to it may only be realized by means of the law which fills the human mind with an ever-increasing power of analysis, and lifts it out of the primordial synthesis in which the world and the mind were once wrapped. Therefore, just as all the forms of life proceed from a cell in which they are held by the power of an indivisible synthesis, and whence they emanate afterwards by a spontaneous division that may be compared to an analysis,—in like manner did the works of the mind unfold by turns in a uniform mode, and according to the rational principle, which is always the same. If we consider our sciences to be more advanced than those of antiquity, they are not the more real for that, but the more analytical. Indeed, the sciences of Greek antiquity, at the stage at which they were in the time of Antoninus, for instance, were more advanced than those of the Asiatic Âryans, for the reason that they had entered more largely into analysis, and into the study of the metaphysical conditions of nature's phenomena. The sum of truth contained in any scientific period is always the same in the main; the difference arises solely from the condition in which truth

may present itself to the mind. In like manner, there is as much life in the child as in the grown man, in the egg as in the bird, in the mammifer as in the fish; were it otherwise, no egg would ever become an animal. The difference lies in the more or less completed status of development—that is to say, in analysis—to which the vital forces pent up in the egg have attained.

If the sacred theory of the Âryans is the form that science adopted in its Asiatic phase, it follows that religion is as true as science; or if wrong, then science must be wrong also. Their object is the same, their method is the same; their processes alone are more or less perfect. Religion must have declared itself in precisely the same simple and comprehensive formulas as those which science employed in more varied, more numerous, more restricted, and more precise terms.

It follows moreover, that it is illogical to put religion and science, as regards their principles, in opposition to each other, and to think that the one refuses to acknowledge the truth whilst the other has no other object in view than its discovery.

How can the arrogations of a few Churches serve as the general dogma for humanity? The Brâhmins never interterfered with free investigations, whilst in the West one Roman priestly body no sooner condemned investigation than another forthwith adopted it, and the majority of believers practised it; indeed, Protestantism regards it as a first rule, and yet Protestants are no less religious nor less Christian than the ultramontanes of Catholicism. Yea, who shall forbid the thoughts of men to be as free in religion as in science?

Let us now consign all past and present dissensions into the hands of that science which is the subject of this book, and by the light of the lamp which those hands hold aloft we shall witness yet the reduction of all religious systems to one common germ.

CHAPTER XV.

RELIGION AND SCIENCE. II.—THE RESULTS.

THE substance of the preceding pages has been the exposition of that method which the authors of religion and modern scholars have hitherto followed. Let us try and discover now the fruits of their respective labours.

Both religion and science have set themselves the task of finding a formula generally applicable to the universe; in other words, the task of finding an expression which, by its various attributes, explains comprehensively all the physical, intellectual, and moral phenomena. We have already seen this formula plainly manifested in the rituals of different Churches, tacitly implied or vividly represented in the ceremonies of worship. Now, knowing that all the constituent elements of religion are intertwined with foreign, moral, political, and ethnological elements, it is the critic's first duty to restore each to its pure, original condition. A physicist who wished to learn the law of the elasticity in steam would not be wise in consulting machinery of any kind, much less when its owners preferred keeping that law a secret. It is often difficult for a priest to unveil the mysteries of his own religion, whereas a simple believer has not only the power, but the right; for religion does not belong exclusively to the priest, it is the common heritage of human kind.

The first man who ever directed his studies to religions, in the present application of the term, was, as I said before, Proclus. He conceived two of the most profoundly correct thoughts; *viz.* that humanity travels along two parallel roads, religion and science,—the one road containing all religions, and leading to the solution of their elements and

their origin. Proclus had, probably, no access to the documents which for the past half century we have been gathering together; moreover science in his days had a far narrower range than now. We are therefore the first who are justified in entering into this problem by scientific proceedings.

Now the invariable result of our late studies has shown that the fundamental formulas of religion are founded upon the absolute unity of the Being, the identity of substance, the universality of life's principle, and the impersonality of reason. We need not go back as far as Brâhminism and Persian Mazdeism in order to find the formal declaration of these doctrines in Âryan religions. The Indian hymns already contain them. Take, for instance, these verses of a hymn addressed to the author of all things, Viçwakarman:

"As the father of light, wise in his thoughts, has produced with the sacred butter these two worlds which bow down before him, now that the horizons are fixed, heaven and earth are developed. The author of all things, wise, great, producer, ordainer, is visible on high; the enjoyment of desired things is where the One is said to reside, beyond the seven Rishis. He who is our father, generator, and ordainer knows all places and all beings; to him, who alone gave the gods their names, the other beings proffer their requests. . . . That object which is above the heavens, above this earth and living gods, could the waters have contained that primordial germ where all gods once saw each other? Yea, the waters contained this primordial germ in which all gods were united; upon the umbilicus of the uncreated was that one produced in whom all beings reside. You know not him who engendered all those things, yet he is within you."

The entire genesis of living or inanimate beings and of the holy sacrifice is set forth in a hymn addressed to Purusha, the supreme masculine principle. Agni, the fire, is everywhere represented as the universal life, the motive cause, the source of intellect, and at the same time as the agent of the holy work and the mystic sacrificer. In the long narration attributed to Dîrghatamas, and which in India is known as the "great hymn," the poet goes on saying, after having indicated the mysterious roads along which travels the igneous principle which shines in the sun and on the altar:

"We say Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni; but it is he who flew to heaven with beautiful wings. The wise give to the one being more than one name."

Elsewhere he says:

". . . Heaven is the father who has begotten me; there is my parentage. My mother is this great earth."

And as though he were familiar with the method that leads to science, the same poet says farther on:

"He who has recognised the father of the world going above from below, and below from above, can he, in his pretence to wisdom, say whence the human soul sprang?"

But in order to thoroughly understand the doctrine, which is scattered throughout the collection of hymns, it is not enough to read merely a few indifferently translated passages; it must be studied as a whole in its own language if the meaning of the myths and figures which abound therein are to be grasped.

If thereafter we turn to the Brâhmin books, or to those which the Persians have preserved and attributed to Zoroaster, we find that the doctrinal elements scattered over the *Vêda* are here collected together, condensed as it were, and that the intellectual labour of the Âryans completed itself in the acceptation of the absolute unity of the being, of which I have before spoken. Those two series of monuments must therefore be looked upon as the last expression of Âryan thought, on the borders of an ancient scientific period. Indeed, when the neuter Brâhm, on the one hand, and the inactive being, on the other, had been respectively conceived by the Indians and Iranians, there was nothing more to seek beyond; the period of intellectual activity closed with them. When one gathers together all the ideas that had been elaborated by those peoples up to their time, we see on the summit the absolute and neutral unity, which, by taking shape, becomes the universal motor of the world, the principle of life, and the supreme object of the mind. In the display of his eternal activity, god the

protector of the world introduced into it a feminine principle, which in the Sanskrit was called *mâyâ*, and which in metaphysics means the possibility of more or less; that is to say, the principle of quantity. In the earthly sense, the supreme god receives the name of *fire*, constituting in animals and in plants, on the one hand, the individual and transmissible life, on the other, the idea; that is to say, the physical or the intellectual forms. As soon as the absolute unity is conceived as a productive one and coupled with a *mâyâ*, this duality must of course repeat itself in its lower productions, in every degree of the productive scale. After which it is possible to realize the phenomena of motion, operating through time and space: the phenomena of life, which perpetuates itself through self-division into sexes; and, lastly, the phenomena of the individual mind, which in itself expresses two irreducible elements. The same theory accounts for the resemblance between beings, considered either in their physical forms and in their strikingly identical mouldings, or in their intellectual functions, one of which, reason, is identical with all who are in possession of it. In sum, the universe conceived thus presents itself as a harmonious whole whose several parts are animated, and whose every law is engendered by one eternal being.

This doctrine might be called pantheism. But I consider this to be a barbarous word, which was never used by the Greeks and has no equivalent either in Sanskrit or in Zend. The word unfortunately has an ominous ring in some ears, and easily frightens timid or prejudiced minds. It is the same with the word republic, which terrifies many people, although we have often in history found the self-government of a nation to be no worse than any other. If I use the word pantheism, even in its wrong construction, I do not include in its meaning those attributes which have won it well-deserved odium, but with the full conviction that the Indo-Persian doctrines have rank far above their predecessors and successors.

When the Greeks commenced philosophising, we know

that they immediately plunged into metaphysics, and constructed physical or ideal systems, with the element of their choice as the universal substance of beings. But the pace of science is more sedate. Immediately after Pericles the Sophists and Socrates himself made a clean sweep of those precipitated hypotheses. The method was beginning to find its level, and whilst the mystic sects were still traditionally carrying on their secret and oriental dogmas, observation, discussion, and the analysis of facts were being actively propounded by independent spirits. It was, in a word, the elaboration of science. Plato, with his lofty genius, which was probably in a great measure inspired by Asia, proposed a system which can scarcely be called pantheism, but in which he nevertheless affirms the unity of substance, the metaphysical nature of matter, its reduction to an eternal *mâyâ*, the periodicity of the world's phenomena, and those great laws which, hidden under symbolic expressions and figures, were to be met with in the oriental doctrines. Aristotle's subsequent system seemed to be a reaction in the opposite direction to platonism; it did, in fact, lead the mind back to prudence and balance. He proclaimed the observation of facts as an absolute necessity, and thereby furnished science with her principal tools. The eight centuries of Alexandrian science that elapsed between Ptolemy Soter and Justinian witnessed the discovery one by one of many laws that preside over phenomena, such as statics, hydrostatics, astronomy, physics, animal and vegetable physiology, geography, and meteorology.

Meanwhile the old schools of philosophy were dying out. Philosophers were turning into logicians and moralists: they took no interest in positive sciences, but spent their days reasoning on abstractions and fretting over life's sad realities. But there came a time when science and scientific minds were sufficiently developed and qualified to form a new school, in which the anatomized condition of the universe was once more constituted into a whole. We all know the doctrine that sprang from the Alexandrian philosophy. We also know that at the time when Alexandrian science first

encountered Christianity, men of the deepest learning were continually accusing each other of Brâhminism and Parsism. Indeed, philosophers as well as a great number of Christians, especially from the East, professed the unity of the absolute principle and the consubstantiality of all things. If we remember that the Christian theory was nothing else than the Âryans' primitive religion, it is not surprising that Christians readily adopted the idea; but a matter of real instruction for us is to see how the entire science of the Greeks gathered itself into one vast philosophic synthesis, and ended in the unity of substance with all its attendant consequences. The scientific period which commences with Thales and ends with the edict of Justinian had therefore remoulded, only with analyses of more precision, the work which the Âryan ancestors had long ago accomplished.

The ancient activity of Asia had engendered a religion; the Alexandrian philosophy was almost a religion in its turn; and when its most illustrious representative, Proclus, died in the midst of his practice at the School of Athens, he was engaged in writing the history of past religions.

Modern science, like that of the Hellênes, has made some noble attempts, of which those of Descartes, of Leibnitz, and of Spinoza are the most renowned. This last has been unanimously voted by critics as the strictest Cartesian in respect of his deductions. Therefore he may be held to be the fittest representative of that school. Now Spinoza is the most absolute pantheist that ever was, whilst the two former are mathematicians; but Descartes, like Socrates, formulated the enfranchisement of thought, and partly realized through Leibnitz's great genius that science needed the subdivision of her domain and the appliance of particular studies to each order of facts and ideas. With these qualifications he may then be looked upon as the true founder of modern sciences. From him they received their lasting impetus, and the possibility of finding their uniting principle is proved.

Pure mathematics have but a feeble philosophical bearing; they apply to any system. The quantities which are their

objects are the various forms of that possibility which the Asiatics called *mâyâ*, and which Plato also called mother, the place, the duality. Now whatever metaphysical theory we may propose, this *mâyâ* is the inevitable condition of every real or even possible phenomenon; it is therefore indued with something absolute; and this the Indians, and later on Plato, understood. Moreover, as this metaphysical element of things is abstract and devoid of all reality, analysis may be applied to it with absolute precision, a precision not due to its methods but to the nature of its object.

But if we reflect that the difference between God and the beings of the universe comes from the fact that God is not a quantity, whilst all things are, it will be understood that all sciences have a tendency to convert themselves into mathematics, with the exception of one among them, metaphysics. The beings of this world are composed of two elements, the one real and of an absolute and permanent nature, the other relative, variable, and consequently of the same nature as quantity. The former is the object of metaphysics; the second is the object of nature's sciences. That which undergoes change in sensible things, or things known to consciousness, is therefore a quantity, and as such may in a manner be represented by abstract formulas. Many among modern sciences already evince a mathematical character in a high degree; the greater proportion of astronomy is composed of calculations, which calculations are founded on the simple and general formula, the law of universal gravitation.

Every subject of this law in the domain of physics may be computed by calculation. The phenomena of light, heat, and even electricity, of magnetism and sound, constitute a vast science, called mathematical physics, a science that travels parallel with experience, and reduces into formulas the laws that have been proved by experience. Now in proportion as observations increase in number, the connascence of their laws becomes ever more apparent; formulas reduce themselves into groups, and these again converge to a unity. This unity of what are called the physical powers

is now the great centre of attraction in the learned world. We do not suppose of course that the natural philosopher is able to make a direct observation of the substance, since we know that it is inaccessible to observation, and that the mere fact of announcing it would make him a metaphysician. It is different however with the observation of phenomena, which does result in detecting their presiding laws; and when some day these laws are shown to be merely the several denominations of one general law, the unity of agencies and phenomenal productions will come to be regarded as the uniform background of all the demonstrations we can be aware of.

Thus the transformation of the magnet into electricity and of electricity into a magnet, then the unity of the law to which these two phenomena are subjected, have brought to light their identification. It has been the same with light, on the one hand, and of heat and electricity, on the other; so that it is possible now-a-days to perceive through the multiplicity of aspects presented by these phenomena, not only a bond of union, but one common and single law. Moreover, within these last few years we have been able to transform all these things into movement, and by movement to reproduce them. Now since two things which are reciprocally each other's cause are identical, we are taught that the groundwork of physical study is the observation of the simple phenomena of movement. This being the case, they must necessarily all obey mechanical laws, and the day will no doubt come when we shall be put into possession of the single formula containing those laws. As a corollary, we shall have the unity of substance for all physical phenomena.

Chemistry also converges to a unity through the theory of equivalents. This conception, which of late years has greatly enlarged its proportions, is Pythagorean and probably oriental. However neither the disciples of Pythagoras nor the orientals had any means of research, nor the instruments of precision, nor our command over the processes of analyses; they could therefore not rise above a general and

vague doctrine, nor satisfy themselves with material proofs. A tremendous stride in itself towards the unity was that which reduced the whole of material nature to about sixty simple bodies. We are now so sure of the analogies between the numerical equivalents of those bodies, that no modern chemist can doubt the simplicity of the elements. They can only hope that some day a more perfect means of analysis, or the discovery of fresh facts, will condense many of these bodies into more elementary and less numerous bodies; the task of science will not be accomplished till the eventual discovery of the unity.

One of the chief handmaids of science is the use of the scales; this mathematical instrument, whose movements are those of the universal law, has proved that in the chemical transformation of bodies nothing fresh is created, nothing is lost. Therefore the sum of material elements is constant, and, as it is impossible to conceive the limits of the universe, this sum is infinite. Hence the varied aspects assumed by matter consist solely of the different shapes which matter takes by turns according to the combinations of its chemical elements. But chemistry does not reach to that substance of things which escape observation; the simple bodies of chemistry are themselves therefore only more or less elementary shapes, whose agglomeration produces composites. If some day these shapes are reduced to a unity by the theory of equivalents, the chemist will be justified in inferring from them the substantial unity of the universe. The observations of Kirchhoff and Bunsen and the more recent ones, have given a greater expansion to the chemical analyses of the sidereal world, and led to the discovery of several terrestrial elements in the sun, which fact coincides with the astronomical theory of our planet. On the other hand, the lengthy and conscientious investigation instituted in Germany on a great number of aerolites has, it is said, shown them to be composed of numberless globules, with their poles generally flattened; the conclusion drawn therefrom is, that formerly they were disaggregate, fluid, with a particular

rotation of their own. Hence it is that comets, whose extent is sometimes many millions of leagues, and whose weight is a few ounces, enter more and more as cosmical matter into the chemical unity of the universe.

But enough. Let us bear this in mind, that though the use of scales may point the way to the unity, it only expresses itself in figures, whilst the bodies which chemistry analyses are visible shapes, and consequently of a geometrical nature. Once analysis has attained the unity of shapes in simple bodies, and not till then, can this problem be considered as solved. Plato and the Pythagoreans before him realized this necessary condition, from which arose the theory in *Timæus;* it was however purely ideal and abstract, and not supported by any experimental proofs. In these days science does not work upon mere intuition; in her onward course she places her foot on the solid ground of observation alone; therefore to her prudent and accurate workmanship we may with confidence entrust the remodeling of these rough-hewn legacies of our Hellenic ancestors. These ancestors themselves stood of course in the same relations to the Asiatic Âryans that we occupy with regard to them. Again we see that science grows by successive stages, and that the most recent metaphysical theories are her final expressions.

Now let us pass on to living beings. In the first place, they belong to chemistry; the matter of which their bodies are made may, by analysis, be reduced to the simple bodies of which the inorganic world is composed. But, as living beings, they are the object of physiology, of which morphology is an appendant. Now this latter science has long since disclosed the elementary and primordial shape of the organized being, I mean the cellule; mammifer, ovipar, or vegetable, "issues living from an egg." Now the animal's egg and the plant's seed answer to an already advanced stage of life. A living being does not begin its existence in its developed shapes, but is visible in the pollen of flowers, in the seed of animals, and in the ovaries before and after conception, and should in those conditions be studied. Analysis will discover there that first cellule con-

taining a few granulations, out of which the full height and breadth of the living being is to spring.

By virtue of a law which we have come to recognise in our days, the cellule feeds and thrives upon itself; by growth and subdivision it produces other cellules, which remain in contiguity with it; and as this working in life goes on, it engenders organs which on the whole bear in different degrees the stamp of individuality. The theory of mediums can alone furnish an explanation of the different shapes which exist among living beings. A lion cannot be engendered by a sheep, any more than a palm tree by a field grass; the cellule from which the lion or the palm tree is to spring requires the female organ of the lion and of the palm tree. This is exactly what the whole of Âryan antiquity expressed by its theory of the *mâyâ*, of which I have spoken before, the theory which, from being physiological, became subsequently metaphysical and universal.

But neither the feminine principle, which in its metaphysical acceptation is the cause of diversity, nor the medium, nor the cellule, taken in its living and elementary shape, can sufficiently explain life itself; that is to say, that power of action which resides in the living being at every stage of its existence and consequently also in the cellule. Therefore there must be within it, besides the material and palpable elements, a principle which escapes observation; and this is the very principle which is the active cause of vital motion, the agent of life. Physiology has no clue to this subject, since by its essential elements it is inaccessible to the instruments and methods of physiology; but the reduction into a unity of all living shapes, that is, into the cellule, is a sign that the agent of life is itself unique, and that the medium, under the abstract condition of the *mâyâ*, is indeed the principle of diversity, in fact, the individuality of shapes. Therefore physiology is to attain the centre of unity by travelling through the province of morphology.

But a shorter road is the study of organs and their functions. We know of course, by comparing animals among themselves and with plants, that the organs, not-

withstanding their apparent variety, all belong to each other in succession. If we take one of the most developed of animals, we can follow down the line till we reach the most rudimentary shape. In the same way we can compare organs among themselves, and by their resemblances prove that they all spring from a primordial organ of which they are more or less completed transformations and phases. This reducing of organs into a unity has been effected for plants as well as for animals. As functions are proportionate with their organs, it follows naturally that they can all be reduced to one function. There are some living beings that have but one organ and one function. They are real cellules, in which the nutrition and the reproduction identify themselves as one unique function; *viz.* the preservation of the individual being and the propagation of species. Within this primitive simplicity science discovers in highly developed beings the existence of all the organs and all the functions.

Thus the world of living beings presents itself at this moment as a collection of shapes reproduceable by one common law, and apparently animated by one vital, unique, and universal agent. They moreover conduce each individually to the subsistence of the whole, for the stronger animals feed on the weaker ones, the weaker ones feed on vegetables. In the same manner, vegetables of a higher order require elaborate matter for their food; only those which are on the lowest step of the ladder can manage to subsist by merely absorbing non-organized bodies.

All living beings are uniformly alike in their chemical elements, but outwardly this uniformity is dispelled by the unceasingly changing conditions through annihilation and reproduction. Granting the outwardly changing shapes of substance, erroneously called matter, we cannot, in the face of attested chemical experiments, doubt that the totality of substance is unvarying; time, space, and motion affect only its outward shapes, physiologically and chemically *ad infinitum*.

These general results and tendencies of the sciences of

observation cannot possibly be disregarded by our modern philosophers, nor by the representatives of the school called eclectic, and which particularly follows Descartes—a school that might well be called psychological, since its principal study is the human soul and the observation of its phenomena. To this order of facts the school has applied a most perfect method and excellent processes of analyses; with the assistance of assiduous and well directed studies it has allotted to each new cognition a particular place in the collective mind, reduced it to its elements, compared these elements, and with these seemingly disconnected components established a classification equally responsible, as botany and zoology.

Similarly, since thought is one of the manifestations of life, its phenomena are subjected to the laws of life; that is to say, to birth, to development, to reproduction, and to destruction. Nothing easier therefore than to watch its transformations. It has been found that the whole range of thought can be brought down to three elementary shapes, which are, pleasure, idea, and action. German philosophers, who have gone even more deeply than we into this matter, have done more than this, and maintained that pleasure and action are one with the idea, and therefore consider this latter as the initial, complete, and unique phenomena, of which the whole range of thought is but a development. When once this view is scientifically confirmed, psychology, like physiology, will be a morphological unity. I am only assuming the probability; psychology however, as we understand it, is still too much hampered by the restrictions of the would-be Cartesian method. Its inquisition into the mental faculties of the adult, perfect Âryan alone is not sufficient or convincing; it should comprise the lower human races and the higher animals; finally, it must inspect the minutest details of the soul's functions and analyse its basest manifestations. Such is the range of psychology; it embraces everything that has life; and just as the physiologist sees all the palpable shapes emanating from the cellule, so can the psychologist also search out the most elementary

shape of which thought is the development. Something like this was aimed at by Aristotle in his *Treaty of the Soul*, and carried on by the subsequent philosophers of Greece; they did not however command analytical processes like ours, therefore the science of to-day is likely to be more demonstrative than theirs.

The union of life and thought and the unity of their principle have been, as we know, since the *Vêda*, the groundwork of the religious doctrine. Aristotle's theory is founded entirely on that notion which in the Alexandrian philosophy came to its metaphysical development. And this notion being as strong as ever now, has once more challenged contemporary psychology. Not long ago we witnessed one of the results of this challenge, which was the victory of those who defended the unity of the principle of life and thought, and hence the conclusion of all physiological studies: if the cellule is the most elementary shape of the living being, its inherent principle of life will eventually develop in a proportionate degree to its mental principle. This mental principle grows with and adapts itself to all the subsequent phases and conditions of life. Similarly the cognition of the soul is traceable to a centre of unity; at least, as far as we can assume from unsubstantial premises of psychology, as they exist in the theory of Agni, in the theory of the Hellênes, and in the present. One path leading to the goal is the theory of impersonal reason. All non-sceptical schools and all men of science acknowledge now that there is in the human mind a faculty for conceiving absolute truths of which mathematics are a mere portion. These truths are universally admitted; but on all other points there are individual opinions on which there can be no unanimity till the scientific discovery of some absolute truth; and that can only be effected by science.

Now a perfected science is not an individual property, but an open field for all who wish to be convinced. If all the facts of observation were reduced to absolute truths and erected on the field of science, they would there receive the

recognition of all believers in science, and all cause for outside discussion and dissent would be once for all removed. Reason is therefore the principle of unity among men. Psychology has shown that, influenced by absolute truths, we attribute some truth to our other conceptions; the more we analyse these truths, the clearer we perceive and estimate our conceptions. A perfected Âryan has the faculty for initiating and developing a science; a Semite has less; other races less again; the most forward of animals, the ape, ranks next; and so on down the ladder of life. Nevertheless reason exists in each of these degrees, for it is the essential of thought, and thought is a parallel of life.

Reason is then the primordial basis of thought, as we are assured by Bossuet, Fénelon, and Malebranche. Moreover it is impersonal and anterior to the person; it is the unique form from which all individual forms of thought are derived. The Greeks and the Christians called it *logos*, or the *word;* the *Vêda* calls it *vâk* (in Latin *vox*). Now psychology has shown that the two or three general formulas or principles of reason are but the analytical development of one idea of whatever denomination we like, which however the religions and philosophies of the West call the idea of God. This idea then constitutes the basis of thought in all its degrees: to men it suggests metaphysics; to all animals the means of motion, nourishment, and procreation; to every living being it gives a universal shape. It resides in the cellule; it gives the unity to the infinite motions and to the numberless shapes of which the universe is composed.

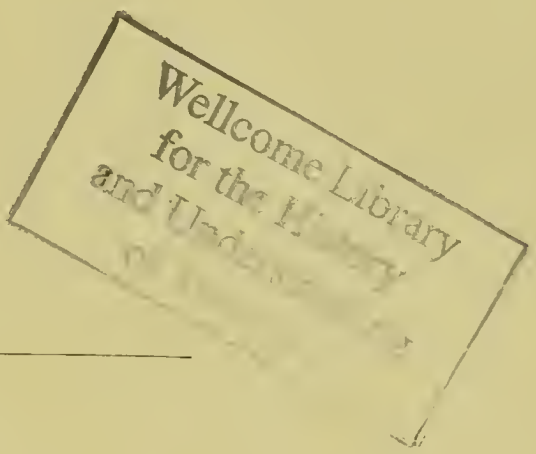
Physics, astronomy, and chemistry for the inorganic world, physiology and psychology for living beings, seem then at this present moment quite prepared for this unity towards which all their analyses are converging. Their sum and synthesis are called metaphysics, and metaphysics begin where special sciences end. The time-honoured science of metaphysics, the substance of Descartes' school, almost fell into discredit through the materialistic and sceptical reaction of the last century. Need I say that it

suffered in an equal degree with religion from the scepticism of the age, seeing that their theory is the same? Religion, and with it all the principles of science, were held answerable for the perpetrations of the Roman Church. The psychological school of France, in its contemptuous treatment of metaphysics and their problems, forgot the dignity of its own position in the eyes of scholars. But all this time Germany had been actively engaged and was well advanced in the study of those problems; yet, with regret be it said, the practice of that country is to dash headlong into weighty questions, to disturb rather than to cultivate the field of science, and to mistake the clouds of dust for metaphysics. Still a few honourable exceptions have cast some important rays into the convergence of the unity; they have been close observers and profound metaphysicians like Goethe and Humboldt, who, unlike Schelling and Hegel, did great service to the cause by never losing sight of real facts or attempting to solve general problems by an immature method. To-day many new scholars are metaphysicians: we cannot doubt that the result of their labour will be the theory of the unity of substance, the universality of life, and its indissoluble union with thought. Upon this central unity all the particular orders of phenomena are now converging; their laws will by-and-by appear as the individual expressions of one universal and immutable law.

If this be the goal of science, she may be likened in her various phases to the Hellenic science. The distinction between the two will consist in the perfected analysis and the changed conditions of the former; but in each the central theory or metaphysics will be the same. It will be proved once more, as the Âryan form of religious dogmas did of old, that religion has as true a foundation as science, that they are identical both in method and doctrine, and that cause for reciprocal enmity does not exist. It will be clearly shown too why certain orthodoxies are such inveterate haters of science, in spite of the non-existence of a plausible cause, that I pointed out just now. Scholars

are not the enemies of God, of Christ, and humanity, as has so often been unjustly averred:[1] they are, on the contrary, of the utmost usefulness, as were the priests in days gone by, when worldly interests were wholly submerged in their search for truth. Science is now searching for the true keynote of the universe. Will all those who collect at the sound of her clear note be criminals in the eyes of Christ and the doomed partakers of eternal condemnation?

[1] See a speech delivered by Cardinal Mathieu at Besançon, Aug. 6th, 1868.



Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.